The Emotional Impact of Police-Involved Shooting on Law Enforcement Officers

An Honors Thesis

by

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Abstract

Police officers protect and serve the community at any cost. The cost can include their physical and mental health. This study interviewed seventeen current and former police officers about their memories of the police action shootings in which they were involved and how these memories resonated in their minds. They were asked questions which prompted them to explain how they were affected physically, mentally, and emotionally by the incident. The interviews were transcribed and coded to find similarities and differences between responses. The original coded data was reduced to sixteen themes and were analyzed for the purposes of this study. The findings revealed many commonalities among the officers in terms of the consequences for them as a result of the shooting incidents. These findings can assist police departments in better understanding the emotional, physical, and social aftermath for officers and in creating meaningful and supportive policies and procedures to shepherd officers through these trying times.

Keywords: police-involved shooting, critical incident, police officer, stress

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Introduction and Problem Statement

Police officers keep the peace and enforce the law but they are not indestructible. Police officers face potential danger each day while on patrol and when they respond to calls for service. Police-involved shootings occur, and there are traumatic consequences for officers such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. PTSD has symptoms such as depression, emotional numbing, difficulty regulating emotions, and hyperactivity (Bardeen, 2013). A study conducted in New Zealand in the 1970s found that over 85 percent of emergency personal have some sort of traumatic reaction when involved in a traumatic event (Stephens, 2008). Traumatic incidents have effects on emergency personal, but police officers walk a fine line when it comes to shooting and not shooting a suspect. If an officer shoots a suspect then the officer has ended a life and this can have adverse effects. These officers could suffer from PTSD and this can affect their jobs. Police officers already have a highly stressful job and the adverse effects of PTSD as a result of an officer-involved shooting can be devastating for an officer. Research is needed into the emotional and social consequences for police officers involved in shootings. Focus should be on the consequences for officers who have fired on citizens causing injury or death. This will permit a better understanding of how to help police officers cope with the mental strain of causing serious injury or death. There is research on how a police officer may perceive a threat in order to make the decision to use deadly force; however, there needs to be a study of the consequences for the officer who uses deadly force.

Literature Review

Police officers make decisions that affect them and the citizens they are sworn to protect. Their job is to serve and protect the public from harm. Officers must make accurate decisions

because citizens should not be stopped or detained unless police officers have a valid reason (Fyfe, 1981). Officers gain experience that allow them to perceive circumstances that typically lead to violence (Fyfe, 1981). Officers perceive their job as important for the wellbeing of the citizens they protect and if police officers do not feel important then they lose their drive and commitment to their job (Fyfe, 1985). This lack of recognition, combined with minimal pay for a high risk job, forces some officers to lose drive to go beyond what their job entails.

Police officers have their own subculture that best be understood by fellow officers. Civilians lack "the personal and organic knowledge of police work (and of life) that comes from police experience, particularly street experience" (Henry, 1995, p. 96). The street experience consists of the officer's degree of exposure in the field, range of encounters, and degree of competence when dealing with different situations including the exposure to death (Henry, 1995). This street exposure is important to the police subculture, because it gives officers a way to gauge the competency level of a new officer, whether a rookie or transfer. The officers will attack the street experience of another officer to make sure the new officer is up to par with the rest and certain experiences have a higher status than others but this varies depending on the subculture at a certain location. Rookie officers learn early in their careers to not trust "outsiders" because "ordinary citizens can be both deceitful and manipulative, often for no clearly discernable reason other than that they are suspicious and distrustful of the police" (Henry, 1995, p. 96). Rookies are kept at a distance until they can prove themselves to be competent enough to become a full-fledged member of the police subculture. The rookies may feel alienated by this process but when they are accepted they are taken into the solidarity of the police subculture. The initiation into the subculture is partially through exposure to death and the experience of death but more importantly through the reactions to these experiences (Henry, 1995). An officer

must be aware of potential risk and be ready to react in any situation, but they must also distance themselves from the effects of these dangerous situations. The norms of a police subculture dictate that an officer needs to keep the solidarity of the subculture strong by showing little emotion.

Police officers have the potential to come into contact with dangerous situations on a day to day basis. Cadets go through training that is supposed to equip them with the knowledge and mentality to make quick, decisive decisions in high risk situations. They go through lethal force training that is supposed to imitate real life lethal encounters. Broome completed a qualitative study on how cadets would react to these mock situations (Broome, 2011). This study was meant to test the psychological and emotional pressures cadets go through in these mock situations.

Police officers are also given ethics training that is meant to give them the tools needed to appropriately handle situations in order to make decisive decisions when it comes to using lethal force in high risk situations (Bardeen, 2013). There are individuals in police related shootings who intend to commit suicide by cop (McKenzie, 2006). This intent is not overtly present during the shooting, so police officers can only make the decision to defend themselves when confronted with an armed assailant. Gun assault against officers, officers calling for back-up, high risk calls (robbery, gunmen, etc.), the suspect pointing a weapon or fires at officers first, and at least one officer is injured during gun fight are situations that police officers may face that increase the chance of deadly force being used (White, 2012). During high risk situations, law enforcement officers have to make decisions in a split second. Officers use speed in high risk situations but this decreases their accuracy (Nieuwenhuys, 2010). They try to make themselves smaller to reduce the risk of being hit, move more, and blink excessively which increases the

amount of time their eyes are closed (Nieuwenhuys, 2010). However, officers do not lose depth perception in high anxiety situations, but did deem the attacker more of a threat sooner (Nieuwhenhuys, 2012). High risk situations cause law enforcement officers to react with high anxiety levels which may hinder their reactions.

Officers face high anxiety levels during these situations and face mental and emotional trauma after the use of deadly force. Debriefings are mandatory for officers after a police-involved shooting but are not always seen through (Addis, 2008). Debriefings are supposed to help an officer cope with their trauma after the use of lethal force. Debriefing is used as a 'cure all' approach that has no follow up check on the officer to check their status (Addis, 2008). Critical Incident Stress Debriefing was used on Australian police officers from New South Wales Police Department. The results suggested that CISD helped officers but external factors made it not possible to directly test them (Leonard, 1999).

Methodology

A snowball sampling method will be used through my faculty advisor. This entails first getting in contact with an officer or somebody who knows an officer who may be willing to partake in this qualitative study. This study used semi-structured confidential interviews to gather information about how police officers are affected psychologically, socially, and physically from being involved in a police-related shooting. The questions in the interview addressed themes such as: Did the shooting affect the officer's work ethic, did it cause depression or any other mental strain, did it affect their interaction with their friends and family, did it affect their relations with other officers, did it impact the officer's health and how, and how did they and/or do they try to overcome this incident with coping mechanisms? These questions were asked of each officer, but the semi-structured interview method gave the researcher

flexibility to ask questions that were related and also relevant. (Berg, 2001). This allows for the participant to elaborate on their answers and for the interviewer to probe for additional relevant information to strive for interview richness and detail. The interviews were audio recorded and each participant signed a consent form before the interview began. Participant were informed of their options to receive help if the study brought back memories of the incident and if they felt adverse effects from the memories. The study used an interactionist approach in order to develop an intersubjective depth through which each side can obtain an understanding of the other (Silverman, 1994). This deeper understanding allowed the participant to be more open and truthful about the answers they gave. This study also used an interpretive approach to analyze the interviews. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of significant actions in order to find similarities and differences between how each participant reacted to their police-involved shooting (Berg, 2001). The qualitative nature of this study allows for high validity but will not be easily generalized to the entire law enforcement community.

Analysis and Findings

This study used in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviewing with participants. A total of 17 participants were interviewed for a total amount of 20 hours and 27 minutes. The average interview was 1 hour and 12 minutes long. All participants were guided through the informed consent process and were assured confidentiality and were current or former municipal or county law enforcement officers who had been involved in a use of force incident which involved firing their duty weapon. In 12 of the incidents the offender died and in 6 of the incidents the offender suffered serious bodily injury. Some of the participants were involved in multiple incidents, and one participant was not directly involved in a police action shooting but was shot during the incident. All participants were male and the sampling frame from which

most individuals were invited to participate came from a police officer whom the faculty advisor knew. Otherwise, there was another officer who referred individuals directly to the investigator.

All interviews were digitally audiotaped for purposes of accuracy. Audiotaping was done with the participant's permission and was also noted in the informed consent process. Once all recordings were made, each interview was transcribed. The transcription resulted in 219 pages of typewritten interview data. During the transcription phase, the investigator examined the data for general themes within the data. Without sharing initial themes with the faculty advisor, the advisor subsequently read the transcripts and gleaned themes from the data as well. With these two individual observations, the investigator and faculty advisor compared their initial findings in terms of themes which were generated from the interview data. All quotes by theme are identified by participant number, e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, etc., for purposes of confidentiality.

Emergent Themes from the Interview Data

Memories of the Shooting, Shots, and Guns. The first theme to report involves memories of the incident. A variety of responses were gleaned from the participants in terms of if they remember or do not remember the number of shots that they fired, if they remember looking down the sights of their gun, and what they remembered about the subject's weapon which could have been used against them. While there were differences in responses, there were also important commonalities.

For example, officers interviewed talked about the number of "shots" they had fired and if they remember hearing the shots. As the following participant reported:

> Participant #1: "I yell 'Drop the gun!' one more time and then I fire my first shot. He didn't go down, so I followed up, at the time I didn't know, with a total of four shots."

This participant went on to add:

> "I fired I think three shots in quick succession and he slumped over like this [demonstrating the physical reaction] but he didn't go down. Probably about the time my third shot gone off the commander started firing. He just went like this [again demonstrating the subject's reaction to being shot] and he didn't go down so I fired one more time and then he went down to the ground."

Other participants did not know how many shots they fired such as Participant #13:

> "Give them an idea where we were at, guess how many rounds we shot, first one I didn't know, second one I had no clue."

This participant went on to add:

> "So not knowing how many I shot the second one I reloaded my magazine to make sure I had a full magazine, a full gun. I did that to make sure after learning from the first one because you don't know how many rounds you fire. If it's one yeah two maybe, when you're shooting a few you don't count rounds."

Participant #14 believed he knew how many shots he fired:

> "I think only six."

Participant #4 did not even have a guess with the number of shots he fired:

> "Never heard them, I didn't even know how many times I'd shot."

Another Participant was later told the number of shots he fired:

> Participant #3: "They said seven because they counted the brass, I have no idea."

While the previous participants had little to say Participant #7 had more to say:

> "I didn't know at the time how many times I shot but I shot eight times through my windshield."

He went on to add:

> "When he got to the other side of his car he turned towards me with the gun and I shot three more times."

Later in the interview Participant #7 stated he did remember his first shot:

> "I remember him hunching forward [from] the first shot.... there is no doubt about it the first shot hit him."

While the previous participant had a lot to say about the shots and what was going through his mind, Participant #5 was very "to the point" and "matter of fact":

> "I shot him four times and killed him."

Participant #8 just remembers his approach before he began shooting:

> "I don't remember shooting I just remember coming up and as I'm doing it I'm mentally thinking 'this motherfucker doesn't see me.' I'm just closing the gap on his back passenger door and start firing and I don't know if I hit him at the time or not but I shot until his arm came up and went right here and went down like that."

While the previous participants did not remember their shots there were participants that knew how many times the shot and even where those shots hit:

> Participant #2: "I put two in her chest and it was over."

Participant #11 also knew how many shots he had:

> "It was thirteen shots."

Participant #15 did not state how many shots he fired but he did state:

> "I was right on with how many rounds I shot even when it came down through the investigation. I was right with the amount of shots."

Participant #12 knew exactly where his shot hit:

"He does a couple little lunges at me. Second time he does that I shoot him one time, center mass right in the middle of the chest."

The following participant, #17, was also matter of fact in the beginning but added more recollections later. When asked how many rounds were fired, the participant said:

"It was just one round."

Later, he stated:

"I remember hearing the shot because it was just one and he was down and then I was on the radio saying what was going on."

Participant #5 was involved in two separate shootings and when asked how many times in the first incident, he stated:

"I shot him four times and killed him."

When asked about the second incident, he stated:

"So I ended up having to pull out my weapon, shot him twice in the chest."

The previous memories of the incident focused on the number of shots that were fired and some of the participants made statements of how they did not focus on their gun sights during their incidents. Such as:

Participant #10: "I just got up and started shooting. I didn't even focus on my sights like we trained."

Participant #13 made a similar comment:

"And I just remember firing my gun. I don't remember looking at my sights."

Participant #14 made multiple statements about not looking down his sights:

"So we just started shooting and like I don't even remember looking down my sights I just started shooting."

He also stated how this was not like target shooting where the focus is the sights:

> "It wasn't like paper target shooting where I'm aiming. It was 'I know it's in the area, I'm shooting.' I mean obviously if I was missing and I, as by myself I would know, but he fell."

He knew he needed to shoot:

> "No, it was, I think it was an instinct thing or a training thing. Because I don't remember looking down the sight and it just happened like I knew I needed to shoot."

While the previous participants do not remember shooting the next participant, #15, remembers "point shooting:"

> "I did not look at my front site. I remember it being a point and shoot thing for me."

Participant #16 made a similar statement:

> "I remember that because I remember right as I'm shooting, I was just point shooting I wasn't actually, I don't remember actually fully looking down my sights until I was like 'why isn't he going to the ground?'"

These participants remembered not focusing on their front sights but there were participants that remember what the guns that were aimed at them looked like:

> Participant #9: "Oh yeah. I think I remember the actual, seeing him. When I did feel something, I looked up at that gun and it looked like that gun was that big [gesturing about the exaggerated sized of the weapon based on his perceptions]."

While the previous participant remembers the gun looking "big" Participant #11 knew the make of the gun:

> "We get fifteen to twenty feet in front of the vehicle and he just raises [his weapon], and I can see this clear as day, a black Glock hand gun, and immediately just start firing."

Participant #15 also knew what type of gun was used:

> "It was an AK-47. When he started coming out with it, and I could see the barrel of it and the front sight posted on it, I knew what it was."

He went on to say:

> "Like I said that gun barrel was just like a glowing sign to me, distinct, and then, I can remember pulling the trigger."

Participant #7 recalls the color of the gun when later asked:

> "They asked me in the interview what color was the gun, 'black!' I knew exactly what the color was I was starring right at it."

Shot on Instinct. The second theme focuses on whether the officers relied on their instincts when they made the decision to shoot the subject who was attacking them. What there thought process was, if their training throughout their law enforcement career impacted them, and what they were thinking as they made this decision. There were participants that stated they shot on "instinct" when they knew their lives were in danger. Such as:

> Participant #11: "It was reaction but you still remember that. You consciously pull the trigger and as I'm pulling the trigger he's still shooting. I know that, I'm seeing shots come through the windshield, you know just had to stop it. That's all I could think about 'if he got out of that vehicle what would he do?' There's students around. There's other officers congregating on the scene. You just had to stop it."

Participant #11 knew he needed to stop the threat and Participant #15 made a similar statement:

> "There is a thought process to it but it's instinct because it's fast. It's a see and immediately go to doing. That incident is sort of one I have been playing in my head for a

> while prior to it because I've seen so many videos of officers getting killed where the suspect will be in a vehicle pursuit. The suspect will stop or whatever, he'll open the door up and have a rifle and start shooting at the officers. So that's sort of one I have been playing in my head so the rifle was an instant threat to me. You take action against that. It was a quick thing."

Participant #16 told his subject to put the gun down:

> "It was pretty much instinctual. I remember yelling at him to drop the gun, as I start to see him walking in front of the car. And at that point the gun was pointed at me and that was it. I told him to drop the gun, he didn't, so I started shooting."

While the previous participant had time to tell his subject to put the gun down this is not always the case, as Participant #7 stated:

> "I didn't have time to say 'stay in your car,' I didn't have time to say 'put the gun down,' I didn't have time to say 'stop police,' all that training you're supposed to do. I didn't have time to think 'shoot him twice'. I thought 'pull this thing til [sic] it runs out of lead.'"

He had stated earlier in the interview that using his gun was his way out:

> "It was pucker factor number one and am I going to get out of this? That's about it, that's my way out… bam-bam-bam."

He knew what his way out was and he felt it was instinctual:

> "As far as shooting through my windshield shooting that guy, getting my gun up and ready or thinking 'I need to shoot this guy,' instinct 100%. It was 100% instinct. I don't think you have time to think about your training."

Participant #7 recalls that he reacted on himself and that might have saved his life:

> "Did everything I was supposed to do but the whole time I thought it was just some error on somebody's part, not a real incident that was taking place. Hindsight that might have saved my life, I reacted on impulse instead of going in thinking, 'oh this is what it is,' maybe that gave me less time to over analyze."

Participant #13 also stated it was instinctual in both of the incidents he was involved in:

> "It was instinctive. The first one seeing the gun, being familiar with an AK. Seen tons and tons of them on house searches and search warrants and ERT callouts. So I knew what it was and when I was it pointed at, seeing it brought up, it was just instinctive. The second one seeing the muzzle flash and seeing the actual shotgun."

This participant knew what the threat was by the sight of the gun pointed at him. Participant #17 saw the "split-second move" that brought him to his decision to shoot:

> "I was actually getting ready to tackle him and that's when I saw the gun, so I backed off a little bit and that's when I got my gun out and by the time I got it out he literally turned around and started running again and that's when I kind of see the split-second move."

When asked if he really didn't have time to think about shooting he stated:

> "Yeah that's kind of how it went."

These participants felt that it was fully instinct of a threat that lead them to shoot while Participant #2 felt it was a mixture of instinct and training:

> "It was automatic. I didn't really think. I didn't really have a thought process. It was more of an instinctive I went directly to the training I did exactly how I was trained to do and there was no really thinking about. There was no real process, and that's what training is for. You keep going so you don't freeze because you freeze you're dead. Ultimately, I was happy with the way things came out. I did what I was trained to do."

He (#2) had no hesitation when he was threatened:

> "When she raised that knife above her head there was no doubt what was going to happen to her, no hesitation, not one bit."

He (#2) did what he had to do to protect himself and he shot when the need arose:

> "Yeah you don't think about it, you just do it. It's what your trained to do, just do it. I didn't have to think about it. Now from the time I saw her from the time she stopped, I'm thinking in my head, 'if she does this I'm going to do that.' I wasn't thinking, 'I'm going to shoot this girl and get it over with.'

The previous participants felt it was an instinct to shoot while other participants were confident it was training, for example:

> Participant #1: "That was absolutely 100% training."

He went on to state:

> "Then my exact thought process was the same thing I tell, if I was taking you out to teach you how to shoot I would teach you a phrase, and once we got all the basics down I go that phrase is sight, acquire, fire. What that means is you find your sights, acquire your target, and fire, doesn't mean jerk the trigger but start your trigger press so that you don't move the gun around and you hit what you are shooting at. That's exactly what was going through my brain when I shot my weapon that day."

Participant #1 had and exact thought process while Participant #9 stated his "training kicks in":

> "It's almost like you black out and your training kicks in. We train so many different situations. I mean if someone's a threat, you stop the threat. A lot to people have misconceptions, they think 'why can't you shoot him in the hand or foot, incapacitate him?' We are trained to shoot to stop the threat. If they are shot and they survive, the

threat stopped. If they are shot and die, the threat still stopped. People still have that misconception of. Plus, if you're under stress, we've done that to where we'll run our heart rate then try to stop and actually shoot and be on target. It's difficult."

When asked if he (#1) felt it was only training he stated:

"Just the training. It's like a switch comes on and you just revert right to your training. That was the one thing I remember specifically about that one."

Participant #10 also reverted to his training:

"Absolutely yeah and not panic. You know you could have just shut down. I could have just stayed there and bled on the ground and shut down. Through the training and what we do it's just it went as well as it could have."

Auditory Exclusion. The third theme focuses on the participants that reported loss of hearing, only hearing certain shots, or not hearing at all during the shooting. For example:

Participant #2: "And I'm just...I'm numb. You've heard of the visual and auditory exclusion and the tunnel vision. That's exactly what it was. When I'm drawing down on her, it was just me and her. I didn't see a thing other than just us that was it. You could have had Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders standing out and I wouldn't have seen them. The only thing I heard, obviously I heard myself yelling at her, I never heard the shots. Never heard them but I heard the empty shell casing hitting the ground. Under all that stress and I hear that. You think it would be the opposite. I would have heard the shots and not the shell casings. But it was the opposite for me, I can't explain it."

Participant #4 had more to say about his auditory exclusion:

> I hear the first shot out of my left ear and I don't remember any other sound. [officer] shoots four times, I shoot six times with my rifle. I never hear anything else and I'll explain that to you. It's called auditory exclusion. Under severe stress when your heart rate spikes there are some things that happen to you physiologically that you can't really control and it's your bodies way of protecting itself. One is the tunnel vision that we just talked about. You really hone in and lock in on what the threat is. You're able to see things, sometimes things slow down, motion slows down even though it's going in real time things are really, your mind is really processing what's going on and it's a slower rate. You get what's called auditory exclusion and it's the bodies way of protecting the hearing. You, normally if we just went out to the range and just shotguns your ears would ring for days or weeks or you could have hearing loss, and I do have some hearing loss in me left ear from the shots being fired but even the shots that I fired my guns on my right side I'm a right handed shooter, I don't remember hearing any of those six shots."

He (#4) went on to state:

> "That first shot I really, we're shoulder to shoulder and that guns right next to my ear. I remember that hurting but then no other sound. I do remember the click and I remember my finger going to the trigger and it's weird but I remember, and I've never experienced this before or after, I just remember how metal feeling the trigger was. It's kind of hard to explain, I don't know if that feeling things are just amplified and you're very sensitive to certain things. I remember the click of my rifle, the trigger felt like metal, which I never experienced before even though it is metal. Which is kind of weird. You look back on it and think 'why did I remember those things and not the sound itself?' I have no hearing

loss in my right ear but I do in my left which is weird because the rifles are twice as loud as a hand gun."

This participant (#4) had some hearing loss from his incident while Participant #10 did not even get a headache:

"But your body reacts to stress differently and during the shooting I focused in on the weapon, the threat towards me. Now I had no hearing protection on and the guy was inside my vehicle behind me shooting a high powered rifle. Normally my ears would hurt for weeks. My body shut my hearing down pretty much and I never had a headache and never had a ringing in my ears form all those bullets going over my head so your body reacts differently toward stress. So I had auditory exclusion, my tunnel vision."

Participant #8 did not remember hearing his subject's shots:

"I don't hear it I just remember watching glass fly out of his windshield, he was shooting into their windshield and at that time was when I grabbed my weapon."

When asked if he heard his own shots he (#8) stated:

"No. So focused on that, all I remember seeing or hearing, I don't remember hearing his gun shots, I remember seeing the glass come flying where he's shooting. I don't remember hearing my gun rounds and stuff."

Participant # 14 made a similar statement:

"I didn't even hear the shots fired."

He (#14) went on to state:

"Like I didn't even hear any of that. You just get zoned in like I don't even remember the bullets going off, nothing. Just that, what do they call it auditory exclusion? Yeah that. You don't hear anything."

When asked if he (#14) remembered his own shots he stated:

> "No, I just zoned in, and I feel like it, your body knows what's about to happen and then just shuts everything down."

While the previous participants had more "matter of fact" responses, Participant #12 was more imaginative with his description:

> "You that's funny you say, no, I mean it was, if I do I don't remember it being, if it was just us right now and I pulled out a gun and shot in this room, you know your ears would be ringing, like holy cow. I've been close to somebody that fired, pop, I mean it never, my ears were never ringing, causes your senses are so heightened on what's in front of you and what's happening. Boom it happens. I'm sure I heard it but it wasn't like you would normally hear a shot, it wasn't like 'BOOM Oh my God someone just fired a shot,' your ears ringing."

Participant #17 also stated his gunshot did not sound as loud as a normal gunshot:

> "The shot…it was a regular shot gunshot with no ear protection it didn't sound as loud as that but I remember, remember hearing it. Usually get some ringing in your ears stuff like that but I don't remember any of that."

While Participant #17 stated his gunshot did not sound as loud as a normal gunshot, Participant #11 recalls it was like blacking out:

> "As that happens you, I mean, it's you hear, auditory exclusion and stuff like that. It's true, you just kind of blackout. You just see that threat and you just try to stop it from occurring."

Participant #16 recalls his auditory exclusion and also that "everything slowed down":

> "One thing I remember that I didn't say, during the shooting, it was called auditory exclusion. Once I started firing my gun I didn't hear anything. I couldn't hear my gun going off. I couldn't hear anything I was focused on him. I never remember hearing my gun going off and it was almost like everything slowed down."

Perception of Time. The fourth theme relates to the participants' perception of time. Like Participant #16, other participants recalled an altered perception of time during their incidents. They recalled time slowing down, speeding up, or even just the realization that their incident happened in such a short amount of time, for example:

> Participant #3: "From the time I got out of the car till [sic] the time the fighting and the shooting was all over was 45 seconds. As long as it took me to explain all of that out, for all the face off for all the stuff, all my thought processed, all the talking to him, the hands in and out of the pockets and telling him three or four times keep his hands out, that whole thing was 45 seconds."

Participant #1 compared his slow motion encounter to TV:

> "It's one of those things literally slow motion, you can see the spoon go flying, you can see the grenade going just like on TV slow motion."

He (#1) went on to state:

> "It's an auditory, visual, it's just everything, I know it's just a perception, time doesn't slow down it just seems like the way you perceive things everything slows down. I just remember like when the grenade fell super high stress and thinking about where can I get cover at?"

He (#1) also stated:

"It's just a perception just like watching a movie, I'm sure you've seen action movies, it was exactly like that."

With this incident, Participant #1 felt like it was happening in slow motion but when he was involved in other instances, and when asked if he experienced slow motion during those, he stated:

"No slow motion."

Like Participant #1's last statement Participant #15 was straight to the point:

"I can tell you that time slowed way down. It slowed way, way down."

Participant #4 had a long explanation for his slow motion encounter but also recalls parts of his incident being "really fast":

"Things were really slow, and even though they're happening in real time it seemed like, let me back up. From the time that we moved until we got into the positon we were in when we had to fire our weapons that seemed like that was really fast."

He (#4) went on to state:

"For me when [officer] and me moved from our point of cover at the gate to the last position where we shot from that seemed like it happened in five second. When we went back and watched the video it was about 20 to 25 seconds. It took us that long. We were moving really slow and methodically but in my mind it was quick. Then once we got to here that's when things really slowed down for me and I think that's because you really perceive the threat, you see the threat you see the gun you see it turn and be pointed at you."

He (#4) also recalls his perception of the subject being vivid because of this altered perception of time:

> "So from that point that's when things really slowed down, when he pulled the gun towards it seemed like that was in slow motion. Then everything is very vivid to me as far as the gun being in his right hand. I knew what he was wearing. We were close enough to see the look on his face. He was all sweaty and had some soot on him. Seeing his body buckle after the shots. I think if you saw that in real time and you weren't involved you probably wouldn't pick up on those things."

He (#4) also remembers his transition back into "real time":

> "For me I saw every little movement and saw every little thing. I remember things like it was bright in the yard but it was dark in the corner. I remember the heat from the fire but I don't remember the sound. It's just things that you can't explain, it's your body's way of processing things and protecting itself and you really can't control. Some of it was fast and some of it was slow. After the shooting had taken place and we moved up to him things went right back into real time. I think it's something you have to experience, it's kind of hard to explain."

While Participant #4 had a lot to say about his encounter, Participant #2 had a shorter response:

> "It seems like it took forever but from the time I encountered her to the time I pulled the trigger was probably two minutes, two and a half minutes at the most."

While Participant #2 felt his incident lasted "forever," Participant # 14 had the opposite perception:

> "He looks back at me a couple times but he is still messing in the center console and it seemed like a couple minutes but it was probably just thirty seconds or so."

Participant #16 recalls his slow motion perception resulting in seeing the action of his gun vividly:

> "I never remember hearing my gun going off and it was almost like everything slowed down. You hear people talk about time 'standing still.' It was like everything slowed down. I remember seeing the action of my gun clearly. I remember seeing you know the slide coming back and the shell going out. I remember seeing it slowly but basically I sat outside for about two hours on scene."

Shock. The fifth theme is about the participants' feelings of shock of shooting someone, the shock that someone is actually pointing a gun at them, and the shock that this incident is actually happening to them, for example:

> Participant #2: "Right after I pulled the trigger she hits the ground and for a couple seconds you're in that, 'oh shit mode.' 'Wow, I really shot somebody.' That's what was going through my mind."

He (#2) also stated:

> "And I'm just I'm numb."

Participant #14 also had an "oh shit" moment:

> "And then once he fell, I was like well just that feeling of 'holy shit that just happened!' Then what's crazy is, went up I think [another officer] kicked the gun over and at that point deputies were on scene. They got their med kit. We had to cut his clothes off then as we're cutting his clothes off that's when we saw he was actually wearing a vest, a bullet proof vest. So we rendered aid to him until the ambulance arrived. That was it crazy, it was one of those things I always told myself if I had to do it I would do it and then it actually happened."

Participant #14 felt it was crazy that he had to shoot somebody even though he always told himself he would if he had to, which he did when the need arose. Participant #8 recalled a sense of shock that this was happening in his city:

> "The feeling was just shock, like I'm not expecting something like that to ever happen, especially somewhere like [name of the city]. To see that was just like, I was just like dumbfounded, 'is he really doing this and does he not see me?' 'He doesn't have a clue I'm here.' He was so focused on that truck that he had no idea I was coming up behind him."

Participant #5 stated it took him a second to realize that the subject had a gun:

> "I seen [sic] what was happening but it took a second to register what was going on, then it registered that that was a gun."

When asked how he (#5) felt after he shot the subject, he stated:

> "So we moved into the house, actually I stayed with the guy and the other two officers move because I was kind of in shock too. This whole event occurred in about twenty seconds. It's fast. It's very fast so kind of in shock at the time, trying to realize what happened."

Similar to the previous participant, Participant #17 took a second to realize what happened:

> "I was just more, after it happened I was just like, 'what, now I just shot him?'"

He (#17) also stated:

> "So I was kind of out of it I couldn't really tell what was going on there, so I mean you know I was just kind of sitting there like 'ok, well, that happened what do we do now?' I was just kind of focused on what was going on at the time like I don't want to say shock but it took a little bit for it to set in what had happened."

Participant #12 was more descriptive with his answer:

"And of course, your training, de-cock the gun, I'm yelling at him because I don't know where the knife went, at that time, 'shit I just shot somebody.'"

He (#12) also stated:

> "I'm thinking, you know my whole minds going it's a crime scene, you know, you gotta [sic] separate the witnesses, gotta [sic] get this information, [officer's] with the bad guy so I run out and make sure I got the two guys that were in the living room. I remember I say /I need your driver's license,' and he's giving it to me, I'm trying to write down his name of his driver's and I'm shaking so bad you know I can't even write so this isn't going to work. So [officer] pulls up and I say can you get his information, [officer] had pulled up to the scene, and had the crime scene tape so I ended up helping him tape off the crime scene."

Participant #7 also had an "oh shit" moment:

> "My exact thought was, and I go to church every week, 'fuck is this really how it's going to go down?' He pulled the gun up and I remember pulling my gun."

Another officer had come to his (#7) aid and gave him a chance to get to cover:

> "Best way to explain it was I wanted to get back up there but I was so far out of it. so far physically and mentally. I remember getting back up there somebody told me to just sit down."

Premonition. The sixth theme focuses on how some participants seemed to have a premonition about their incidents such as, having a "bad feeling" before their incidents, the

participant performed an action without realizing why, or predicted a subject would do a certain action, for example:

> Participant #2: "Sometimes you just have that feeling that this is going to go south, this is going to be bad."

Participant #4 had a more descriptive answer of his "bad feeling":

> "Well I kind of knew deep down inside this is not going to go well based on past experiences. I think everybody has that sixth sense, you get a feeling of situations and feel how serious they are. It even gives me chills sitting here thinking about it. I knew deep down inside, I didn't know who it was going to be, but I knew this guy wasn't going to give up. I knew he was either going to kill himself or he was going to shoot it out with the police or shoot one of us or kill one of us or he was going to make us kill him. Stuff happens real fast so it's kind of a faintly thought, you don't really have a lot of time to sit down and process, it was something inside of me that was telling me this is not going to end well."

The previous participants had "bad feelings" about their incidents. Participant #10 had a feeling beforehand that ended up saving him from injury:

> "For some reason that day I put on my SWAT vest which is one like this [showing the vest] but it has sleeves that attach here and here and actually there is a thin strap and a ballistic sleeve that covers my arms. So it's kind of cumbersome but I put that on for some reason and it was sunny out so I had my sun glasses on."

He (#10) went on to state:

> "I hadn't even put in park yet and I saw him raise his gun and rest it on the steering wheel with two hands and started shooting before I put it in park the bullet went to the left side

> of my head and there was one to the right side and I don't normally wear glasses but it was sunny so I wore mine which in hindsight it saved me from getting glass pieces in my eye the glass dust from breakage."

When asked if he had any inkling of why he decided to put on his glasses that day, he stated:

> "No. So that saved me from serious injury. The dust in my eyes I may not have been able to see well enough to return fire. Now I wear clear glasses, even at night, just so I don't get wood fragments or particles of dust in my eyes we have to do it again."

Participant #8 had a similar experience of almost not putting on a vest before his incident as the previous participant:

> "I almost didn't wear a vest that day because it kind of looked a little bulky, but still it's [month] so I threw my jacket over it and you really couldn't tell I had my vest on."

The previous participants had premonitions before their incidents, but Participant #15 felt something was weird with the way his subject was reacting:

> "I'm thinking 'this is weird' because normally I'm expecting the door to go flying open and him to go running."

Participant #14 had a similar prediction in his incident:

> "His driver's door was open so I was thinking he was just going to run."

Participant #7 recalls going to an incident and seeing a subject driving erratically and not realizing that was the subject of the incident:

> "I thought, 'man, there is a drunk guy.' It started heading right at me. I just thought 'this guy is drunk why is there a drunk guy?'"

While the previous participants' premonitions kept them from injury and ended up helping them the same cannot be said for Participant #6:

> "The second round came a little bit lower and hit me in the right leg upper, upper thigh area. I look back because this was actually on videotape and you can see me take a step back. I don't know if I heard something in the house or what happened but for whatever reason I took one step back and that one step back is what put me in line to catch that round. I look at it now and I wonder why I did that. I don't have a reason for it now but I kind of stepped right into it more or less."

Clarity of Memories. The seventh theme focuses on how the participants were asked if they remembered anything about their incident with "clarity." There were many different responses that did not fit into one specific category but needed to be reported nonetheless. For example, Participant #1 was involved in several incidents, only one where he was the one that shot the subject, and he showed his protectiveness for his fellow officers:

> "I just remember 'man this can't happen.' 'It isn't supposed to happen.' 'We trained for this stuff it isn't supposed to happen.' That's instantly replaced by anger and then just kicked into mode so to speak of what do we do we got to get him out of here."

During another incident a first responder kept trying to pick up an item at the scene of a shooting and this would end up endangering Participant #1's fellow officer, because the fellow officer was the one who shot the subject during the incident:

> "He did it like three times so the fourth time I kick him in the face and I said 'you need to leave this is a crime scene.' I was mad."

During another incident one of his (#1) fellow officers was thought to be shot so:

> "I'm like you've got blood all over your face. He starts yelling get this fucking vest off me. I start helping him rib the vest off. It was just weird because I literally felt almost every square inch of his body to make sure there wasn't a bullet hole in him."

He (#1) later stated:

> "We had to go downtown which pissed me off because I wanted to go to the hospital."

Participant #1 was always focused on his fellow officers and making sure they were okay. During his own incident where he shot the subject he did not perceive what was around him until the threat was neutralized:

> "And that's when the heat from the fire hit, I didn't even perceive that until right then."

Participant #1 was focused on making sure his buddies were okay and during his own incident he did not perceive the fire until the threat was neutralized. Participant #3 recalled his standoff with his subject being like an old western:

> "He drops his hands and turns around and we face off. I instantly got to thinking about the old Clint Eastwood westerns, the whole thing [I'm] wondering 'who was going to draw first' was what was going through my mind."

He (#3) later stated:

> "I just kept thinking back to the western and it was going to be a quick draw and that is exactly what I was thinking. I think the only thing that messed that up was when he saw [officer's] lights when he was coming over the tracks, I think it through that timing off, it through that whole stalemate off."

While he remembered thinking the incident was like a western movie there were parts of the incident that Participant #3 did not remember:

> "There is a gap in there that I do not know happened. I remember grabbing him from behind trying to drag him down and then the next thing I know I'm looking at his belly and there is a big thump on the back of my head. I hear a gunshot. I originally thought that he had just butt struck me with the gun and on reflex pulled the trigger on the gun. I remember thinking 'okay deadly force, game on, things in play now.' I always believed that he fell and rolled and then was on the ground with his legs up and I just kind of shot he rounds up in return but from what [officer] says I actually shot him on the way down. Your memory can be all jacked up in the middle of this stuff apparently."

He (#3) also remembered when he though the threat was over:

> "Bad guy's sweats are red. I'm originally thinking threat over, holster and then but I remember thinking [officer's] going to have to take care of him because I could feel that I was injured."

While he felt the threat was over he (#3) knew he needed to stay alert until the other officer got the subject in handcuffs:

> "I remember thinking the whole time I got to stay with it in case he gets up and does something stupid I got to be able to still react and cover him. I remember soon as [officer] says he has him in custody I remember that was my first adrenal let down. Kind of felt like somebody took the wind out of me and then I felt like a little dog, you know how dogs do circles until they find a place to lay down, that's what I was trying to do was lay down, I remember going in a little circle then I plop down right in the mud and that's where I pretty much stayed."

Even after the incident he (#3) was monitoring the situation until they took his earpiece out:

> "Everything was good until they took my gun belt off, I had an earpiece in and I was tracking all the radio traffic that was going around and then when they unplugged me and take my belt off so they could put me on the board. I was, I always kind of equated it to star trek fans like when they take the guy out from the collective, I really felt lost at that point because I couldn't hear what was going on with everybody."

Participant #3 was ready to react if he needed to and so was Participant #4. He (#4) was going to do what he needed to do in order to protect the citizens and his fellow officers:

> "My first thought was when he came around and pointed the gun at me was, I actually took my rifle off safe and my finger went to the trigger. We always operate our guns on safe, finger off the trigger until you have the target you know you are going to have to shoot. I'd encountered target, gun goes off safe, finger goes to trigger. My first thoughts were 'he didn't drop the gun so I'm going to have to shoot him' but then he disappears right away. I can tell with where his arm is I know where he's at behind the corner and for a split second I thought 'just shoot through the siding.' But at the same time I'm thinking 'I'm here, if I shoot through this siding something that I can't see and I miss or that bullet hits the stud or something inside that structure and ricochets I could possibly shoot the other policeman here.' And I'm talking a very split second of thinking that and I was like 'I can't do it, it's not safe to do so.' I go back on safe finger off trigger."

He (#4) recalled how he and other officers gave the subject multiple chances to drop his gun:

> "He has refused everything that we've told him. He has been told numerous times drop the gun. He continues to be a direct threat by pointing that gun at multiple policemen multiple times. Clearly he is not going to give up. I could not allow him to escape into the neighborhood."

He (#4) also recalls how he got tunnel vision but his sight was not narrowed but just focused on what was in front of him:

> "I have no idea if the guys behind us even go in, under stress like that it's easy to get a little bit of tunnel vision. Some people get tunnel vision that's really, really tight that all they see is what's directly in front of them. I was very aware of everything in the backyard, I wasn't concerned about who was behind me. I really didn't even care, I knew that [officer] and I were, the two of us were plenty to handle this situation so in my mind it didn't matter if there was anybody behind us or not."

He also recalled how he vividly remembers the metal feel of the trigger:

> "The one thing I remember is the click of my safety going from safe to fire, I remember the metal feel of the trigger which is weird. Those are the two things I remember."

Participant #6 recalls his thought process after he was shot:

> "They get to talking about if you've ever heard the term somebody says your life flashes in front of your eyes, it does to a degree because I started thinking several things within a fraction of a second. I remember thinking about where I was hit, took it out of me so I knew, 'okay I got a major artery right there,' that's the first thing I thought was 'wow did it just get that artery?' I thought about me wife. I thought about my kids. I thought about not taking another shot just 'bang-bang-bang' I remember thinking 'it's so fast!'"

He (#6) went on to state:

> That whole period I'm thinking I'm waiting to either blackout or I'm waiting to lose a significant amount of blood if I was actually hit in that artery. It got to be thirty seconds maybe forty-five and I realized I'm stilling feeling okay. Other than the actual pain I was still feeling fine.

However, he (#6) kept moving:

> "I maintained my position. I never went down. It hurt like unbelievable. I was still able to move I was still able to do what I needed to do."

He knew he (#6) was still in this:

> "I didn't go down, obviously I limped over I was still able to do what I needed to do but a lot of that is that I prepared myself just listening to stories of guys that die because they thought they were supposed to. The mindset that 'okay I got shot okay this is it.' I was telling myself 'this can't be it I'm still in this fight.' 'I'm not losing blood, I'm not going out, I'm not blacking out, I'm in this.'"

He (#6) refused to stop the operation:

> "I don't wanna [sic] become a cog in that wheel 'okay downed officer let's get him out.' No, I'm going to where I'm going and go take care of this place and get it. Then you can come back and deal with me after that's over."

He (#6) stated what it felt like to be shot:

> "It hurt. It felt like a hot sledge hammer hit me in the leg and it was just a burn and it was almost like an electrocuting kind of a feel. It felt like, it was really weird it was like I could tell a nerve had been hit. That was it for the physical pain."

Participant #6 recalled how he began the process of preparing himself for the end right after he was shot:

> "So I never got to the point where, never when I knew this is the end, it was more of I need to prepare myself for that. It's like I started the process in my mind. I never got to the point when I knew this is gonna [sic] be it. It just felt calm, I was surprisingly calm for the situation. I just don't think I felt after a certain point that there was going to be any

trouble. It's kind of a weird deal but I did know what it was like to prepare myself for it. It's hard to explain. I knew the potential was there and that's the closest that I've been to that situation but I didn't in very short time I realized 'no I'm okay.'"

Participant #9 recalls thinking of his son after he had been shot:

"Wondering if I was even going to live or not. I didn't know how bad it was at the time. Thinking about my son here because I'm a single parent, him being here by himself. Just wondering if you're going to survive or not."

He (#9) had been in hundreds of this type of incidents before with nothing going wrong:

"I've gone on hundreds of those where we'll arrest them no incident. That was the main thing I wanted to get out of the truck quick enough to get him covered to where something like that couldn't have happened. This is the situation where he just literally came right up and started shooting through the window of his car."

While Participant #9 knew he had been shot, Participant #10 did not realize he was hurt until after the fact:

"Once we cleared the vehicle to make sure he was no longer a threat we got him and I started feeling blood trickle from my face and it was from the dust cutting small cuts and realized sometime during that initial process one of those bullets had hit me in the arm in my ballistic sleeve. Never penetrated, never had a bruise, I never even knew I was shot until after the fact."

He (#9) also recalled having tunnel vision when he first encountered the subject:

"And that's where my tunnel vision went to. I didn't really see his face I just saw the gun sitting on top of the steering wheel pointed at me and that's what I focused on."

Participant #11 also recalled having tunnel vision:

"You know you just have that tunnel vision where I'm watching him and watching him fire and I don't see anybody in front of me."

He (#11) also stated how he knew he needed to eliminate the threat:

"He was still moving and you just have to eliminate that threat. I don't know what those other guys are doing. I don't know if they ran. To this day I didn't see anybody except for [officer] when he came up and reacted after that. You see that person who is firing shots at you and other people and you have to, like I said, eliminate that threat and until it's eliminated you just don't stop. You don't stop to wait. Just make sure everybody's safe."

He (#11) also stated:

"I just remember we just gotta [sic] stop this because it was just so quick. He knew what he was doing. He didn't hesitate and he wasn't going to stop until we stopped, stopped him. That's all I remember and once I got done I quickly assess to see if anybody was hurt and see the blood and I think that helped a lot too, helping him. You just wanna [sic] make sure everybody else was safe. I know somebodies gonna [sic] take care of this. You can't take care of everything. I just wanted to take care of one of my guys."

He (#11) remembered how after the threat was neutralized he helped the officer who had been injured:

"Just focus on, doing something instead of just standing around and kind of looking like 'what happened?'. You give you that mission that you have to preserve life. That felt good because you know it's bad. You know something just happened to somebody. I didn't know he was dead at the time but I knew he wasn't a threat anymore. You go over there and you're able to help out with him and it made you feel good knowing that, 'I'm

> pretty sure he's going to be okay once EMS got there.' They are able to get him and it looked like it was a superficial wound. It looked bad at the time."

Participant #12 recalled what the subject said:

> "I remember this, he looks at me and it's like the wind goes out of him. I remember him looking at me and he said 'I wasn't going to do anything and then he falls to the ground.'"

He (#12) also stated:

> "His face, I remember that, I remember what he said, I always remember that. But as far as, I mean I remember the circumstances pretty well. I'm sure there's parts of it I'm getting wrong because time has been going but I always remember him giving me that look like the wind just went right out of him and him saying I wasn't going to do anything."

He (#12) renders aid to the subject he just shot but does not recall when he holstered his weapon:

> "The old guns we used to have…the old Smith and Wesson de-cock[ed] and holstered, that's what we always did on the gun range. And you know talk about muscle memory, don't even remember doing that. But de-cocked and holstered and went and got that sweatshirt and put it on his chest, don't remember doing that with the gun, don't remember holstering the gun."

He (#12) does remember that he was backed into a corner with a subject that was lunging at him with a knife and he felt he had no other option than to shoot him:

> "But yeah like you said with that circumstance you just couldn't have done it. In that circumstance you wouldn't have that option. At least, I didn't see it as an option."

The previous participant felt he had no other choice. Participant #13 recalled how he would not have shot if the subject's dome light wasn't on:

> "The first one…the thing that I recall is one with his dome light on and his door open it was easy to see into the vehicle. If that door had been shut and his dome light hadn't have been on I probably wouldn't have fired on him because I wouldn't have been able to see the rifle."

Participant #14 remembers the smell of lead after the subject was shot:

> "He is getting shot and I'll always remember the distinct smell of lead in that shooting, because I was behind them about two feet and the wind was blowing that way. I just heard the 'pop pops' and the smell."

Time to Process the Incident. The eighth theme to report involves the amount of time it took officers to process what happened, realize what happened to them, and their reactions after the fact. For example, multiple participants needed time to process the reality of the incident. Participant #2 reported:

> "But I was sitting up one night, about a week or two after it happened, [my wife] had already gone to bed, and it hit me, you killed somebody. You had a part in somebody's, mom, grandma, sister, aunt not being there anymore."

Participant #17 recalled it took a couple days to realize what happened:

> "I mean it wasn't, it took a couple days to really kind of realize the gravity of what really happened, at the time not so much."

Participant #14 remembered the reality sinking in after his incident:

> "I'd say maybe a couple days but it wasn't like I was freaked out or worried about anything. It was just the reality sinking in of that just happened."

Participant #15 remarks on how he was given a couple days off before he had to give his formal statement:

> "They said you are going to do your official statement in three days that will give you a little bit of time to settle down because you know your adrenaline is going, gives you time to process what happened. Gives you time to remember what happened because initially when things happen you forget some things. Also, it gives you time to remember what happened. Went back in with lawyer to give official statement to state police. At this point we felt we did nothing wrong and it ended up everyone felt we did nothing wrong. The state police advised us of our rights. We tell them what happened and at this point it hits us this is real. I'm looked at as potentially committing a crime."

He (#15) also stated:

> "Because initially your adrenaline is pumping so much that you forget some details and after you have had time to sort of normalize again you start remembering. You start remembering smaller pieces of what happened."

Participant #13 had a similar answer:

> "Yeah it takes a few days for your brain to comprehend things and remember things over those couple days."

The previous participants recalled if took time for the realization of what happened to them to sink in while Participant #1 reported his mind being in a fog after his incident:

> "The first week maybe even two weeks I was in this fog that couldn't focus on something. Like if we were sitting there and had huge trouble focusing. If you gave me a

task to do I didn't have any problem with that but, and the way I explained this to some other people was we took a trip to [city], I've made that trip a hundred times before, I missed every freakin [sic] turn I needed to make. My wife had to say 'I think you missed your turn.' Every single turn I needed to make I missed it, wasn't driving bad, wasn't weaving, I just was out of it."

Participant #3 reported a similar reaction:

"I remember I went to one but I remember my brain was so scrambled that I wasn't able to really process anything. Because we're talking days after the event so my head is still swimming. I couldn't really focus on anything."

Heightened Awareness. The ninth theme deals with how officers remembered heightened states of awareness after the incident. They were more aware of their surroundings, were more observant, and how they reacted with people's situations. For example, Participant #11 reported:

"You're a little more cautious when you approach things. What's going on around you. I do know that I have always had issues sitting with my back towards people but now it's even more. It's brought it into my home life because I used to never carry a gun when I was off duty. Didn't care to, it was never an issue for me. Now I do. It pretty much changed right after that. That's the reality that life's cruel and there are cruel people in it. I would rather be in a position where I can help somebody else out and not be that victim. It changed my perspective on that stuff. My wife said why do you carry now? I'd rather have it now just feel a little more secure if something were to happen."

He (#11) also stated:

"You take a little bit more notice when you're walking up to houses. When you're talking to people. You really pay more attention to their hands, their reactions because not only do you have to watch out for verbal threats you really have to watch out for nonverbal cues. Those threats. Just the positioning. How they lay their body. Those are the stuff because they could sit there and not say a word but their actions are going to indicate what's gonna [sic], what they're gonna [sic] do. I think I'm more cognitive of what people do and react and react accordingly."

Participant #14 had a similar response:

"And really, this might sound weird, but being in that shooting I feel like made me better police. Well, when nothing happens to you, you just assume nothing will, and something did happen, so I just assume shits going to go south at any point and you gotta [sic] be ready for it. It's the complacency thing that everybody talks about. Just assuming that somethings going to happen like going to alarm calls just assume someone's going to be in there. And I've been on a couple where people were and it's just it makes you be on your toes more."

Participant #16 also stays on his toes and is more vigilant when he interacts with people:

"I would say I was more vigilant in certain areas. I wouldn't say I was careless but stuff I didn't pay much attention to I would pay more attention to. My philosophy is 'Imma [sic] tell you once and if you don't do it I'm going to make you do it.' When it comes to safety that's how it goes."

Participant #17 was asked if this changed how he did his job:

> "Yeah I'd say so I'm a little more, I mean you're always aware when you take this job that stuff like that can happen but until it actually does happen you become a little more aware, I guess, you kind of realize that."

Participant #4 said he felt he was already aware but he became even more aware after his incident:

> "I'm pretty fortunate in that respect so that part of policing never changed, I think it does make you more aware, I was kind of already in that awareness zone anyway."

Participant #1 remarked on how he would rush into situations but this changed after his incident:

> "I think I did a lot more of that but then after this it kind of slowed me down made me think. I can definitely say I use my head more in situations now than what I did then."

He (#1) also stated:

> "The big one is like I said the 'slowing down.' By that I just mean thinking before you leap more than anything."

Participant #7 stated he became more aware on traffic stops:

> "I'm a lot more aware on traffic stops, I'm not afraid to put my hand on my gun when I'm walking up there. Before I thought that would maybe intimidate or offend people."

Participant #15 elaborated on what his awareness felt like:

> "It's basically like being a rookie officer all over again. You're really high alert. After you have been on a job for a while, not saying you're not on alert, but some things don't amp you up as much or as it does when you're that rookie or just coming back from something like that. It's just because that's the event you were most recently in. You're on a higher alert. You're watching. You want people to do exactly what you want them to do. That way there is no opportunity to have to do that again."

Similar to Participant #15, Participant #10 elaborated on how he was aware:

> "A lot of things seemed to slow down for me. I was observing a lot more on the raids."

He (#10) had the opposite of tunnel vision:

> "Sometimes you go in and get tunnel vision and I felt like my eyes my focus was a lot broader now. I was picking up things a lot quicker."

He (#10) observed more:

> "Or you just observe more and you pick things up a lot quicker but I felt like that what I did personally."

He (#10) took in his surroundings more:

> "Taking in more of the surrounding areas. I am able to observe more now going in able to slow myself down and actually see more around me."

Participant #9 focused on how it made him more careful with what he did so he could go back to his family each day:

> "My wife would tell you that it hasn't affected me at all, but I feel like it's made me be more careful on stuff I do. I think if anything it made me realize how important my family is like my daughter and wife but the shooting is so black and white there is no grey in that."

Participant #3 recalled how he became less lenient with people and made sure he could see their hands:

> "I'm not as lenient with people. When it comes to when I'm talking to people and making them keep their hands out of their pockets or doing anything of those things where they can't keep their hands where I can see them, I'll stand back on a car off a traffic stop until I can see their hands. I will even tell them put both hands up on the wheel when I get up

to that door. If I can't see them when I'm walking up there. If I'm talking to somebody and say it's supposed to be ask, tell, make, I pretty much do the tell, make. I take out that other step because I'm not going to give them the opportunity I know will happen. I wasn't giving them the opportunity, I 'kept get your hands out of your pockets, get your hands out of your pockets' and that's where I ended up. So I'm trying to prevent that from happening again, most people get the picture when I get stern and I tell them 'keep your hands out of your pockets or this is going to end badly for you.' Usually once I say those words after I've already told them once then they usually get the idea. It definitely matured me a lot as an officer and doing those things but to be more conscience of what people do with their hands that can hurt you."

However, it helped him (#3) see a broader picture:

"I think I learned to look into things and see things in a little deeper light through that and see each individual thing and I hate the shades of grey just because I hate that stupid book/movie so I try not to say that phrase. But just the different aspects of life and where people are and where I've come to the realization too through some of the things I do you could bankrupt the family. Just helped me see that broader picture of things and what necessarily is my job."

Participant #9 also found himself understanding people's situations more:

"Yeah I see myself dealing with people, I guess, I understand why people might do what they do now. Before it's like, 'you're breaking the law that's it, no ifs, ands, or buts.' Now it's like I see myself cutting people a break. Trying to help them out if possible. Just more open minded I guess."

Participant #12 realized that certain calls are not as serious as he originally thought:

"I think when you go back you realize that maybe a little more what a serious call is."

Also:

"I think when I came back from that you're a little more slack [sic] with people. At least I was cutting them a break like 'let's try to help somebody out here,' not be such an ass. I think that changed it a little."

He (#12) also stated:

"That's my point is that I think after that happened you are nicer to people, you're a little bit more aware."

Participant #6 found his higher state of awareness was that he was more sensitive to details, such as:

"Getting back to the psychological part of it I remember thinking this is what it's like so things became a little more sensitive to me. I was more emotional a little bit more emotional about things. Let's say if I was talking to my wife, to this day if I talk to my wife about something or my kids, I want details about what they did. I want to know everything about their practices about their schools. Their lives in general. They can't make that relation to me and it's almost like I hound them and the reason I want to know more information is because I want to enjoy it with them. I want to make sure I'm involved in their lives. I've told my wife when we've had discussions I want all the details and I want her to know all the details. And sometimes I get overbearing with it because I ask too many questions. Some of that's the investigative detective side of me as a policeman, because I think we ask questions. That how we solve crimes and that's how we get results in law enforcement. Those two factors combined kind of make me an overbearing person at times if there is information that I think I deserve and I don't get it.

> I keep asking, I keep asking. It wears my wife out. Wearing my kids out but I'm just trying to appreciate life and I'm trying to appreciate literally every minute. I'm trying to go day by day. I want to enjoy today. It's Monday, it's going to be a hectic day but there is silver lining things to enjoy about it and that's what I like to do. That's kind of how I think it affected me. It just made me appreciate things a little more."

He (#6) had a heightened sensitivity but also became more aware of his surroundings:

> "But I do remember being much more cognizant of windows and my surroundings."

He (#6) was also more aware on calls:

> "So going back on the calls once I mean I realize I try not to get lackadaisical or I try not to get complacent in how I address calls because it can happen that quick from when you least expect it. Somebody who is in the wrong mindset that day and wants to take it out on somebody, I definitely made adjustments that way. I try not to get complacent, be mindful that it can happen and will happen again unfortunately."

Anger. The tenth theme was made up of multiple responses from participants' including anger, frustration, and annoyances about themselves or other people and because there were so many statements the ones that best represent anger were chosen from each participant, for example:

> Participant #2: "People don't realize how crappy it is to go through something like this. Most people don't realize I have to wake up every single day for the rest of my life knowing I killed somebody. That's just fine. I don't have a problem with the physical act of doing it but just all the other BS you've got to put up with."

He (#2) also had frustrations about himself:

"I was an ass for a long time. I was an ass to my wife, I was an ass to my co-workers, because I wasn't properly dealing with all the stress."

Participant #3 had anger at people who second guess the police:

"I get mad when people wanna [sic] sit back and they wanna [sic] second guess what we do out here when they don't have an adrenaline rush when they don't have, most of those people probably never fought for their live in the first place and want to tell me, well nobody ever really told me I was wrong but when they second guess other officers. It makes other people second guess are they gonna [sic] get sued? When you go through and I have a split second to make a decision and then you got those people out there wanting to second guess what we do as a whole. As police what we do when we get in those situations and you're going to make a decision that might affect the rest of my life."

He (#3) was also frustrated because the first trial for his suspect ended in a miss trial because a few jurors would not agree about the attempted murder charge:

"So I guess you can actually put the gun on the back of somebody's head and pull the trigger and not intend to kill them."

Participant #4 was angry at his subject because he had multiple chances to give up:

"In a way I did, the situation was bad in itself and I really didn't feel bad for that guy because we gave him all kinds of opportunities and he put it upon himself to force us into that situation. So I think there was a little bit of anger there at him, 'you made us do this.' Things didn't have to be that way."

He (#4) was frustrated that a psychiatrist told him and other officers to reach out to him if they needed him and he did not answer the calls:

> "[officer] reached out to him several times and never even got a phone call back. Then I was just furious. I'm thinking I can't believe that you've told us to reach out to you then when we do you don't help us. And that's when I really got pissed, you know what, screw you guys you don't care about us."

Participant #5 was frustrated with coworkers telling him how to do his job:

> "Telling me that I needed to get out I needed to do more. I needed to get back and this is coming from guys that's not been involved in anything like I was involved in but they're trying to tell me how to do my job or what I should be doing when they have no understanding."

He (#5) also stated:

> "It still didn't sit well when you got people that's never experienced anything then they try to tell you who has how you should do your job when they had no comprehension of the things that you lived through and the things that you live with every day. They don't have any idea."

Participant #6 had frustrations with the public:

> "There is always a grey area that we have to work under which makes this job so difficult is somebody is going to second guess this decision always. Enjoy the time you're to be fine and eighty, ninety percent of people are going to support you but ten to twenty are going to hammer it for you. That's what makes this job real difficult is dealing with all that. Lawyers and lawsuits things like that weigh on you. Just because someone is always wanting to question the police probably because it's the authority we have and people resent the authority we have and what ability we have for control on some people. People

resent that so they make it as difficult as they can for us and that do that by critiquing everything we do."

He (#6) was also frustrated with the subject that shot him:

"Only thing I remember is her attorney turning and saying how sorry she was but not one time did she ever say 'I'm so sorry this happened I thought you were,' she never did that. if you sincerely believe that and that's what you want this jury to believe you can't make your story a little better and actually apologize? She wasn't about to apologize she knew what she was doing. It was very frustrating."

Participant #7 was angry about the lack of support:

"The part about this whole deal that really sucks is not necessarily what you do, I know it sounds cold and callous but I could have cared less what had happened to him I could have cared less if I injured him whether I paralyzed him whether I killed him. I could care less and I could care less for his family whether he's alive, dead, in a coma. I don't care he tried to kill me, I beat him to the punch that's the way I think about it. It's the lack of support, the lack of caring, the lack of ongoing support that you get from every aspect of the judicial, the people you work with, the judges, the prosecutors."

He (#7) just wanted some sort of support:

"It was almost like when I wanted people to come talk to me or help me out it was like they were pushing me away from them. That's the way I felt because I kind of wanted this overwhelming support and I wasn't getting it. I kind of wanted overwhelming support for my family and I didn't get it. It wasn't overwhelming like do everything for me, I would have paid money to have someone from the town of [town] to bring over a

dinner like the day or two afterwards. It was almost like they had the mindset just leave them alone they'll be alright."

Participant #8 only had one comment of frustration:

"And nothing against them up here or at the department or anything but they offered those guys counseling, the guys that pulled the trigger but they never offered anybody else counseling to talk about it. Some guys need it, not saying that I really needed it but it would have been nice to offer the counseling like 'hey I know you were there if you want it's none of our business but if you want here's an option to you.' It was just never offered. There was a lot of people down there. So a lot of people saw it and a lot of people went in that yard and just because they didn't pull the trigger doesn't mean they're not affected any different than the guy that pulled the trigger and they witnessed it. I wish they'd have offered it."

Participant #10 was frustrated with the criminal justice system:

"It frustrates me a little more now. Not the job but some of the processes that surround that job like seeing criminals released early and constantly chasing the criminals that should be locked up in prison do to our lenient system, they're not, so how many times do I need to address that same threat? And I'm fortunate enough to continue through it. It's just the system is repeating itself even quicker than it had in the past. Our sentencing guidelines are lighter the charging information has been changed so the sentences are lighter it's seemed like the direction of law enforcement criminal justice system is going backwards and is almost the people committing the crimes get a better opportunity now to come back out, instead everything lenient unless its murder or rape."

Participant #11 was frustrated with the public and media:

> "You do have a much more sense of awareness of going into those types of houses or those types of unknowns. That there is a possibility that somebody is going to shoot back at you. We are the police however we aren't invincible and people don't care anymore. They have taken the badge of authority and it's more like a badge of mistrust now through media. That's why we are seeing such an influx of these police shootings now because people don't care. There's just no ramifications. They don't care. When we drop our guard like we've dropped it, we're going to continue to have them and it's going to happen more frequently. I started looking at a lot more of those types of situations. Those police action shootings. The school shootings. You start looking at a lot more of them and digesting what occurred. The events that led up to it. I think before that I just kind of, I'd read it and not want to know about it because it's a fact. Now I, what can I do to prevent something like that from happening again?"

Participant #12 was annoyed at other officers who said they "almost had to shoot someone" when they were trying to empathize:

> "I'll tell you what, one of the things that always bothered me with policemen is that you have that story and then somebody says, 'hey I was almost in something like that or man I stopped this guy' and you don't say it to them because you know they are just trying to help, but you wanna [sic] say, 'almost ain't [sic] even close, almost ain't [sic] like doing it.' Almost isn't something you think about when you go home and everybody's talking about you, almost don't [sic] mean shit. Almost, you go home you go to the next thing and you're done with it. I knew they were trying to help, 'hey you know I pulled my gun and I thought I was going to have to,' it's nowhere close to being the same."

Participant #13 was frustrated with people making comments about the incident, because they were not there:

> "Everyone says 'they're getting their life back on track, they're a good guy, they didn't go out to hurt anybody.' The first guy had a long rap sheet of resisting police, shooting people, intimidating people that they shot so they wouldn't testify against them. He was an all-around bad guy, but it's family, they are trying to paint a picture of they're not a bad guy. Well, we got proof that he's a bad guy. It was mostly from the family. We got a little bit of we stood over him. He didn't have the gun anymore and we shot him. Shot him point blank and that's why we paralyzed him. That was mostly on you get on the internet and you get on the news websites and you read all the comments. You just got to shake your head at all these people saying this is what happened. They weren't there."

Participant #15 was angry at his subject, because he was out to kill someone:

> "He was going to kill. If he would have had the opportunity, he was going to kill one of us. It ended up coming out from the officer that initially started firing he had seen him messing with the rifle. I don't know if he was trying to get the magazine seeded or trying to get a round in the chamber our vests don't do anything for those. Our vests will not do anything for an AK-47 round. AK-47 round will go through like it's butter like a knife through butter. He had a 75 round drum magazine. All of us were using handguns. None of us had the firepower he had so if he had started shooting at us, if he had had an opportunity to start shooting at us then there was a good chance that one or all of us would have been dead. So that was why I was angry because he had this rifle, he had a vest on, obviously ready to get shot at. And like I said I was happy because we were all okay. All of us are okay and we are feeling we are good at this point. We're okay. We

can deal with whatever else comes out of it. I knew in my mind that I was justified in what I did. I didn't start firing at him as soon as I heard the other gunshots. I didn't start firing until I saw the weapon when I realized it was pointed at my back up officer. So I knew I was justified in what I did."

Social Support. The eleventh theme deals with what kinds of social support officers were given by friends, family, and coworkers after their incident. The top one or two comments will be reported because of the multitude of responses. For example, Participant #1 reported:

"But I know I could call anyone of those guys with a legitimate issue and they are going to go to the ends of the earth to take care of it. But at the same time we don't all go see the new Star Wars movie together or we don't have once a month barbeques where the entire team comes, it's not like that. That's how I feel."

But he (#1) got the most of his support from the officer he was involved in with his incident:

"That was the other thing that I think that came out of this was I'm close with some of those guys obviously more than others, obviously I'm tied to the guy that was on my shoulder that day til [sic] the day we die. He and I have talked and talked and talked."

Participant #2 reported how one of his coworkers gave him the riot act:

"It took one of my coworkers setting me down one day and just giving me the riot act. 'Dude, you need to get a handle on this.' He was a little more graphic than that but 'you need to get a handle on this.' It wasn't until then, I was like 'oh shit,' and then I went home and told my wife the conversation I'd had with him and she lost it. She started crying because she was feeling the same way he was feeling but didn't know how to tell

me or didn't want to tell me in fear of it becoming worse. Now that I look back on it, it makes sense."

He (#2) also does not know how to thank his close friends:

"My close friends just so many people I just can't thank them. I don't have time to thank them all. Those that were real close to me, they understood, they weren't afraid to tell me 'hey you're being an ass, you need to fix that stuff.'"

Participant #3 said he had a steady stream of support but then it just ended:

"I remember sitting at home, I think it was the next day that I had a steady stream or over a couple days I think. Almost every person in the department ended up coming to the house and visiting. I get the schools of thought on this, but after everyone made their thing it was like everyone disappeared. There was not one after that. It was like I was just left to go out there. I felt like I was abandoned a little bit. I get from other people's perspectives that you don't want to come to much then you feel like you're bugging that you're getting in the way of the healing process. It almost felt like I was dropped, 'okay we did out part we came and said and did everything; and you know poof. I listened to other guys that said they went too far the other direction and was like calling every five minutes. There's got to be a happy medium in there or at least somebody be designated to come every once in a while and say 'hey how you doing?' Even if it's just once a week. That's just kind of the way I felt about it and I think each individual person is different too."

He (#3) also recalls what got him back on track was talking to another officer who had been through a similar incident as him:

"That was the biggest thing but I think where I really made the turn, I'd been back to work and I'd had some issues and I finally got back to that point to where I was like 'do I really wanna [sic] keep doing this job or not?' I had to really think through that. I remember [name of officer] got me in contact with another officer who had been through a shooting and has actually been shot and I think I spent forty-five minutes, an hour maybe on the phone with this guy. Just to hear from somebody else how had been through it and they survived it and went back to work and still had a good career, that was my mental moment that 'okay this can be done.' 'I can go back to this, I can be normal and react in reasonable manner.' 'This isn't gonna [sic] become me.' That was my real turning moment even though there was a lot of people that, they would say the right phrases like we're trained to do. 'I don't know what you're going through.' For sexual assault victims you're supposed to say that, 'I don't know what you're going through but...' And I finally got tired of hearing that enough then I was like 'then how can you help me?' If you don't truly know then, I realize that they're there for support and they're just trying to be there for support but it eventually got to the point in my mind where I go ' how can you help me?' 'How are you helping me?' Because it wasn't until I talked to somebody else who'd actually been in it, who had been through it that's when I made, I really remember that that's when I made the turn. That was probably the biggest healing moment for me."

Participant #4 said that the support was initially good but then people "back off":

"The department is really good about surrounding you initially, and I think this is just human nature once they kind of know you are okay then people 'back off.' When it's really not the time to back off. And I don't mean that you are constantly hounding

somebody but to me you have to keep track of people who are involved in these situations."

He (#4) also stated:

"But there were a lot of people that I really didn't expect would reach out to me that did and continued for a long time. But then there were people who, it kind of works both ways, there were people that I thought that would that didn't, that part of it kind of bothered me. But then the more I thought about it I was like some people aren't good at that. I guess it doesn't mean that they really don't care and sometimes that way I'll offer my support and I'll do anything for you let me know but sometimes I feel if I'm reaching out to somebody else that I don't want to be a burden on them either, I don't want to be that nagging person, you kind of leave the ball in their court. Sometimes you can't leave it in their court."

Participant #5 remarked on he the support he got:

"Those are some lessons you learn later. I always had supportive friends but they don't know. When those things happen, your cell phone will blow up. People calling you, texting you, checking on you, 'you good?'"

He (#5) also stated:

"Whatever for the first week. Then after that it's gone, you still have your close friends but it's kind it happened and you move on, you move on with your life."

Participant #6 talked about how his support tapered off:

"Within the first three or four weeks they were coming around quite a bit, once everyone realized 'okay I'm alright and I'll be back to work' that tapered off to a degree.

Participant #7 felt he couldn't tell the truth about how he felt:

> "The wall is more put up when I feel like I'm saying too much and it might to back to the wrong person and I put that wall up."

Participant #8 had coworkers who came up and told him how they did not think they could do what he did and how it changed their perspective:

> "Everyone was really great. I had some officers come up to me, I think it made them realize what they were doing. and they said 'I don't think I could have done what you did.' Which is great that their saying that but in my mind 'well what the fuck are you doing being a cop?' 'Now do I want you backing me up?' A lot of officers came up and 'I'm going to start wearing my vest every day from now on.' I think it's a wake-up call for them, there are people in this town that will shoot you so a lot of people started wearing their vests more but I never really heard anything negative. It's all been positive and everyone's been super supportive."

He (#8) also stated how he felt he could talk to the other officers who were involved in his incident with him:

> "I hadn't worked much with [name of officer] prior to that until we got out to the unit and I think it did speed up the bonding and we were closer after that. I feel like I can go to [officer] and talk to him about anything so the same thing with [name of officer]. We have that in common with each other so we can always go to each other for that."

Participant #9 recalled how people would come check on him:

> "Oh yeah. There was tons of people that would come and checkup and everything."

Participant #10 had a similar response:

> "Oh yeah. The chief was great. The mayor stopped by. Lot of friends called. SWAT guys called."

Participant #11 also remarked on how the chief checked up on him:

> "Yeah the chief called several times on those first few days. And yes, the chief and I have been friends for years before this. A long time afterwards he was making sure we were okay. He checked up."

Participant #12 recalled how he had to shut off his phone because of all the calls:

> "Always people calling. That was one of the things were I didn't answer the phone for a couple days because I knew it was blowing up. I didn't have a cell phone back then. I just didn't answer the phone, unplugged the answering machine, and just kind of let it go. After about a week or so when it all kind of calms down then I start calling people back and [officer], I know a good buddy of mine, was always calling me, 'hey son of a bitch pick up the phone just checking up on you.' We had people stop by and things like that."

He (#12) also stated how he never felt alone:

> "Yeah, you really feel the brotherhood when something like that happens. You have guys that call you that aren't even from your department. That makes you feel, 'hey do you need anything,' the FOP called me, my district FOP rep. Check on you, crisis prevention team stopped and checked on me, they were great. That makes you feel pretty good. Everybody's out there concerned about you. You never feel alone, I never felt alone."

Participant #13 also had to shut his phone off:

> "My phone was going off. I eventually had to shut it off. They were checking on me and all that stuff."

He (#13) had multiple people call him every day:

"On our first one the chief called us like every day. The deputy chief called us every day. Then you've gotten officers who would text you and call you. That's when I lost a lot of sleep because my phone kept blowing up."

Participant #14 commented that he had a good support system:

"Yeah, I had a lot of, you get a lot of phone calls. The chief called a lot. People called a lot. A lot of Facebook stuff. It was a good support system."

He (#14) never had to tell anyone to stop calling him:

"Yeah, I mean I never had to say stop calling or anything. It wasn't all the time but it was a couple times a day, so it was nice."

Participant #15 stated he and the other officers who were involved in the incident with him were in constant contact:

"Me and the other two officers were in constant contact throughout that period of time. Our families were in contact. We got together with the other officers who were working that night. The administration at that point were checking up on us regularly. The other officers who were our friends were constantly checking up on us. So yeah there was a lot of contact and a lot of support during that period of time."

He (#15) also stated:

"Really it's just the support. You get the support and I think it's important to talk about it. Not necessarily need to speak about the exact details but to get your feelings about it out."

Participant #16 stated how while he was still at the scene people were checking up on him:

"I sat out there for a while. That's just people coming up and talking to you to make sure you're alright."

He (#16) also stated:

> "Everybody that was involved was checking up on everybody. We're a small enough department where everyone is family. There were points where I had to give my phone to my wife, 'here answer all these text messages.' 'I'm not going to sit here and type five thousand responses.' Everyone was calling to make sure you're alright, make sure you don't need anything."

Participant #17 was getting text messages from coworkers he did not even know:

> "Yeah I got I don't know how many text messages I got from, and I hadn't been on that long so I didn't even know, other than the people I worked with I really didn't even know that many people so I'm getting a lot of text messages from numbers I don't know and even people from the sheriff's department and getting Facebook messages and stuff like that. Yeah there was a lot of and we've had, I think, there are four or five guys that I directly work with that have been involved in shootings and just talking to them, it was a pretty good support system."

He (#17) also stated:

> "Yeah even after I came back I rode with somebody for my first week back and just to kind of get a feel for it because I hadn't been doing it for that long and I'd been off for 2 months and then yeah people come up and ask me how I was doing every once in a while and last [month] on the one-year anniversary of it everyone kind of asked me 'how I was doing,' everything like that."

Resolve/Conviction. The twelfth theme focuses on how some participants found that they had a new conviction or resolve about how or why they are in law enforcement. For some, it

solidified why they did what they did or they knew they could do their job no matter the circumstances. For example:

> Participant #1: "So on the back burner of my brain that day was my team, if somebody is going to shoot this guy, if I have to shoot him then I'm going to end it right now, I'm not getting my guys hurt. I'm not going to expose any of my guys to have to finish the job I was supposed to finish."

Participant #2 had to make sure he was going home at the end of the day:

> "I know I did the right thing. I don't have a problem with what I did. It was either her or was it going to be me. I'm going home at the end of my shift. God forbid if that means I have to shoot you, have to kick your ass, or have to sit there and talk to you for three hours to get out of it. I don't care, I'm going home."

He (#2) also stated:

> "We are trained to shoot until the threat is no longer a threat. If that means I have to shoot you once or I have to shoot you six times, that's what I'm going to do. If you happened to die as a result of my action, that's the way it goes. I did not pull the trigger to kill that woman, I pulled that trigger so that I could go home, so that I didn't get hurt. So I could go see my family, that's why I pulled the trigger because I was going home. Because from day one, the sergeants I had at that time on my shift, they were just relentless of train hard, train correctly. Do what you gotta [sic] do to go home every morning. That still is in my head every single day, every day."

He (#2) did not want to use deadly force but he will again:

> "When any kind of call comes out where the potential for deadly force is there I think about it, I do. I hope I don't have to, but my hope of not having to do it has not and will

not take away from my ability to do it if I have to. It's like for parents that spank their kids, they don't want to do it, if they have to do it again they will. It's kind of like that. Just don't wanna [sic] do it again."

Participant #3 has a mental process that he thinks about:

"I remember some of those talks that talked about survival and not giving up. There's the three human responses, flight, fight, or freeze. That's why you go through the mental process. That's why when I go on a traffic stop the driver's dead before I get to the door, in my mind. I hope that I never have to do it but that thought process is already done and I'm already prepared for that should it come to that when I get to that door. When you've already mentally prepared yourself and preplanned then you're more likely to act and do what is reasonable instead of you half hazardly [sic] walk up there like it's no big deal. Then you have to begin to go through that thought process and now I got to make a plan, you gotta [sic] do all those things and granted a lot of those things happen like that but if you've already pre-done all that stuff then you just go and react."

He (#3) went to a counselor who gave him a book to read that gave him a revelation:

"Then I read through it and I got out what he was trying to tell me. Basically, police work is not about the gun. Light bulb kind of came on, 'ding.' That's also another aspect that kind of helped me see that bigger picture and shape the officer that I am today and how I deal with people today in the decisions that I make. I look at all that as a positive outcome from the negative situation."

Participant #4 had absolute trust in his partner that day:

"If there had been guys behind us they couldn't have shot, they couldn't have yelled the commands any louder 'to drop the gun' so I'm glad it was [officer] in the respects that I

trust him tactically, I wouldn't say I trust him the most, but there is [sic] probably four guys in this department that I would go into any situation with and he's one of them. I'm glad it was him because it made it easy, it's kind of like that well-oiled machine, you're used to working together constantly and you've kind of molded yourself with each other. Having him there I knew we were going to be able to overcome whatever happened."

He (#4) feels that the recovery process is continuous:

"Yeah it helped and that's just one part of it. That's to me the recovery is a constant process and I kind of look at it like you go through something this critical, something this extreme, for me personally I look at it like you have to treat it, I'd hate to say like an addiction, but it's kind of like an alcoholic having to seek help and having to do things day to day or like a drug addict."

Participant #7 had some coworkers that wanted him to act like his incident was a great act of manliness and if he had acted like that too they would have treated him differently:

"Sometimes I wish I had just acted like I was a badass, 'oh yeah it was awesome you should have seen it.' I wish I would have acted like that kiddingly. I'm glad I acted the way I did. I was like 'if I would have acted like it didn't bother me I would have been treated a whole lot different'."

During the incident he (#7) did what he had to do to protect himself:

"It never was the actual physical shoot, I never had a problem with that. People would say 'man why didn't you kill that guy?' I would say, 'I guess I tried,' but I don't care if he's dead, alive, in fact I'm kind of happy that he's alive because at least he gets the chance to live the rest of his life. He's not DRT, dead right there. I don't care, I never

thought twice about shooting him. He pulled a gun I pointed a gun at me I pointed mine I pulled the trigger first."

Participant #8 did his job to protect his fellow officers:

"This guy is actively trying to kill a police officer and that's my job to protect them and myself so I was just doing that, so I don't think it really mentally affected me as far as losing sleep."

He (#8) was resolute that he was doing "right" as an officer:

"I didn't have to go through a grand jury I didn't have to worry about 'did I do something wrong?' I knew from the second I started pulling that trigger that I'm okay. He is trying to kill one of my buddies so I didn't have to go through that extra stress that a lot of other officers have to go through. I couldn't imagine waiting and going through a grand jury. That would be stressful, and I think that's the reason why it didn't really affect me a whole lot because I didn't have that stress. I was told from the get go 'hey what you did that's awesome you did a good job.' There was no questions."

Participant #11 chose to stay proactive and positive in his life:

"If you dwell on it and if you make an issue out of it, then I think that's where the issue where it's going to consume you and you're going to let it consume you. If you stay positive, just stay proactive and have a purpose in life I think you will just move on and do better things."

Participant #12 felt justified in what he did to protect himself:

"I'm not trying to sound like a hardass [sic] but I was totally okay with it. I felt totally justified and never went back."

He (#12) was determined to carry on with his life:

> "In fact, that day, I remember I was going to mow my yard that do, so when I left the police station I made sure that's what I did. Because I thought to myself, 'I'm not going to let this son of a bitch, he's not going to be a big part of my life where he's going to affect me anyway at all.' As ridiculous as that is I remember thinking that, that's what I said I was going to do and that's what I'm going to do."

Participant #13 had prepared himself for the possibility had may have to shoot someone:

> "I won't go into specifics on what some guys said but that kind of, for me it was like 'okay, it could happen and it was going to happen.' I guess mentally I prepared myself more than they mentally prepared themselves."

He (#13) did not want to shoot anyone but he was proud that he was able so that he and his coworkers could go home that day:

> "To me it was something that happened, something that I don't regret. I'm glad that I was able to get out, especially as a supervisor, went home that night, that morning. You don't want to have to kill somebody or shoot somebody but I was proud that I was able to do it and everyone went home okay. It can come off as some bravado of being tough but it was just part of the job. It was just something that nobody wants to do but it happened. It's just happened to me twice. The mental preparation of I've got to be the first one in on the door where someone's probably going to have a gun, yeah I'm going to pull the trigger."

Participant #14 is always on edge when he talks to people:

> "It's just an eye opening experience. Really you went from, 'I guess it could happen' and then it happened. And then, my mom said 'it skewed my view on people.' I think it was just reality setting in. There is that line of be nice to everybody but have a way to kill them. That type of thing. You just don't want to be that guy that got okeydoked [sic]

> because you trusted someone. I'm always nice to people but on edge, just be prepared. What is it, failure to prepare is preparing to fail. Always have a plan. That is what that has taught me. Our motto at the academy was hope for the best train for the worst. That's basically what it taught me."

Participant #15 felt justified:

> "Because like I said I knew what I did was justified and that my part in it helped save our lives."

He (#15) also stated:

> "I would do it again if I had to do it again but I want to be justified when I do it. I don't ever want to do it then look back and say 'I shouldn't have done that' or say 'man that was questionable.' Anytime I do something like that I want to be justified."

Ready to Return to Work. The thirteenth theme focuses on whether the participants felt they were ready to return to work or not. Many were also ready to get back to work at the end of their administrative leave but a few felt they went back too soon. For example:

> Participant #1: "I was like 'I want to come back to work tomorrow,' I told the chief that the day of the incident, I told the psychiatrist that, and once I'd actually, once everything had slowed down and my wife talked to me, 'I was like you're right I didn't need to do anything.' 'I just need to figure out what I need to figure out, think through what I need to think through, make sure my heads right.'"

Participant #2 regretted he went back so soon:

"Now that I look back on it I don't think I had any business going back but I wanted to go back. I wanted to get back out there and show them all I could still do it. That this didn't break me."

Participant #3 realized he needed more time to heal mentally:

"Oh yeah because you have to be away from it because of you're not gonna [sic], even though I was physically cleared I wouldn't have been able to function. I wouldn't have been able to make right decisions. It would have been a very bad thing. It would have been detrimental to my healing process has they tried to put me back in too soon. I think it is imperative that you give the person time enough to get through it to process it out. And see if they person's going to be able to process it out and be able to go back because I think depending on the individual you can get to the point where you're like 'no I can't do this anymore, I'm done.' But I knew that wasn't me."

He (#3), however, did get tired of sitting at home:

"My wife will never believe that I say this but you can only watch so much TV. I actually was tired of watching TV, I cannot sit here and watch this TV anymore. Now that's not to say that's not all I did because I took the kids down to the reservoir and we went fishing but by the time I got to the end of that [months] I was more than ready to come back to work. I could not sit in the house anymore. There is a limit. You get to the point where you're like 'life has to go on.' 'I can't just stop.' You feel like you're kind of frozen because if you're there and you're doing that then 'I'm in this box' and you can only go so far in this box. You have to go back to your normal, go back to living life, doing, you can't just sit."

Participant #4 wanted to get back to work right after the incident happened:

"I have all this stuff to do in three days, and I remember asking the chief when the chief came in upstairs the same day in the conference room, and I go, I said 'chief can I go over to my office, can I go to my office,' I said, 'I need to do time sheets and I got this to do and I got that to do.' And he goes, 'no.' And I go, 'but you don't understand', and I go, 'I'm just sitting here I could be over there getting my work done.' And he kind of got irritated with me, not because he was mad, he was just like 'are you kidding me?' 'You were just involved in a shooting and you want to go back to work?' And I was thinking 'I got to get this stuff done.'"

He (#4) went on to ask:

"And I was like, 'well can I come in tomorrow and do it?'"

He (#4) felt it was just his way of coping:

"People process things and cope differently, it was just my way of being normal I guess. Going back into the normal day things."

Participant #7 felt he was ready to go back to work but he was not:

"I was ready to go back to work. I felt like I was ready but I really wasn't. I should have taken so much more time to make sure, to talk to the right people, to get everything in line, to kind of force everybody's hand into making sure me mentally I was ready to go back. I went back and I wasn't mentally ready to go back. No absolutely not. I think I could have been ready in a month to go back but needed to talk to a lot more people. I needed to find some guys that maybe had been through it."

Participant #8 was in a position to where he could ease himself back into his job:

"I could control how much I did when I came back. I don't have to take calls. I can move at my own pace so if I wasn't feeling it that day just sit there at my computer. Go as slow

as I want until I get ready to jump back head first into it. I think that helped out a lot too because I wasn't forced to go back out. I'm not out there on the street. I'm not going to a dangerous domestic calls. I was able to put myself where I wanted to be. If I wanted to go to that I could, if not, I'll sit back and chill."

Participant #9 debated whether to retire:

"You think about you could possibly pension off. I went ahead and decided I missed the work, so I decided to go back to work and work through it."

Participant #10 did not want to sit idle:

"And I had actually I was ready to come back. I didn't want to sit at home and have idle time and think. I was eager to come back and get going again so I was off for just a couple weeks then I came back to work."

He (#10) wanted to preoccupy his mind:

"Just played in over in your head, and the what ifs, 'what if I had gotten out when I had gotten to' and 'I wouldn't be alive right now.' So rather than me sitting up thinking about it and worrying about what could have happened I wanted to come back to work and actually preoccupy my mind and get moving on past it."

Participant #11 had a similar response:

"Yeah I work all the time anyway. I think a lot of that is I've just always done that my entire life. You know I think it's really, it's worse the more that you sit and think and reflect. You just need to go on with your life."

He (#11) also stated:

"Sitting idle has always been bad for me like with school work. I can't do it. I have to be doing something. I have to be with a project whether it be at home or here at work. I

think that helps out with anything. I have never been one to sit on the couch all day or watch TV all day. I think that would probably be harder for somebody if they had to do that. I just keep myself busy and you just move one. Really I don't even think about it until somebody asks a question about it."

Participant #13 felt it was strange to be off work for so long:

"The hardest thing was being put on administrative leave. I've never been suspended, to being put on leave, I know I wasn't in trouble, but not being at work was strange for me. The longest I'd taken off was ten days for vacation. That was odd."

He (#13) was pushing to go back to work:

"I think we were off for three weeks and we were pushing to come back because we wanted things to get back to normal. Played a lot of video games while I was off. It was more boredom than anything."

Participant #14 felt it was nice to just relax at him but he became bored:

"At that time, it was just me and my wife, so she'd go to work and I'd be at home, Xboxin [sic] it up. You can only do so much of that, and I was just like 'man.' But it was just nice to relax, so it was good to be off but at the same time I was getting bored. Just ready to get back to work."

Participant #15 wanted to get back to work because he had nothing else to do:

"That was a rough time because I was out money. I didn't have extra money to do anything. You know you're sitting at home all the time and that's horrible. And it's winter so it's not like you can go out and do anything. You are pretty much stuck to the house and there is only so much you can do at the house. I was ready to come back."

Gun as an Identity. The fourteenth theme addresses how an officer's gun is a part of their identity. Many of the participants noted how attached they were to their gun. It was a symbol of their authority, was a part of their identity, or had sentimental value because it was the gun they used during their shootings, for example:

> Participant #1: "I got my gun back, my personally owned gun, about a week, week and a half which was big to me because it wasn't like you go to a gun store and by a gun, my gun was modified. I had built that gun, it was worth a lot of money and like I said 'it was mine.' That relieved a lot of stress for me."

Participant #3 recalls how it is protocol to issue a new gun:

> "They have protocols in place where they bring you a new weapon so you still feel like your police. You do those things and try to bring some of that normalcy so you don't feel so ostracized, you don't feel like you are no longer police, 'we're not giving you a gun we're not trusting you with a gun.' They don't do that, they bring you and issue you a new one."

However, he (#3) did not get the option to keep the gun that was used in his incident:

> "No and I'm a little upset about that because, they were changing models of our weapons because they got them with the flashlight rails on the bottom, well they just traded in all the old stuff, didn't ask me if I wanted that gun. Just traded it off because I had one of the guys go look it up and it was actually in the records where they traded it off. I was a little peeved over that."

Participant #4 says that his department does not make officers turn over guns in public:

> "I needed to get my gun to them, there are certain things we do about turning our guns over in private, you don't do that in the public. There are some things mentally that go on

with policeman if they have to render or give their weapon up. You have to be careful when you do that because they feel like they've done something wrong and that creates that mindset, and they're already in a stressful situation and does something that humanly, worldly is really not acceptable in a lot of ways. You don't want to make things worse on them stress wise or make them feel like they've done something wrong or they're a suspect or they're a criminal so we do that a certain way ever though they understand that the gun is evidence."

Participant #12 makes sure that he gets his men guns:

"It is with a lot of guys because that's their whole person, that's their identity. They take that from them and some guys may have had it ten, fifteen years. I think to a lot of guys that's a big issue and a lot of departments make sure they have one to give to them. They take your gun away. That was important out here for me with these guys to make sure they had a gun. I just knowing what's coming is huge."

He (#12) was asked if he felt it would be emasculating for officers:

"Right! It's their identity. Why did you get your gun taken away? Because you did something wrong. That's what they are thinking."

Participant #13 recalls how his department issues him a new gun because he is not suspended but on administrative leave:

"Yeah, they take our gun, all our rounds, our magazines, that way they have an idea of how many rounds we fired. Then they gave us a replacement since we are not being suspended and on administrative leave. They gave us a replacement until we got ours back."

He (#13) was asked if he still had the gun:

"Yeah, I still got it too."

Participant #14 recalls how he ended up buying his:

"So they give you a replacement and then when we went from 40s to 9s. I actually bought my 40 that I was in the shooting with, at no discount. I was like 'I'm definitely buying that one,' it was a sentimental thing."

Participant #15 also purchased his:

"Yes, and we changed weapons and I ended up purchasing that weapon."

Participant #16 recalls his department's policy:

"That point they took me back to the police department, once I got to the police department our policy is, basically they aren't going to leave you without a gun. If you're a cop everywhere I go I have a gun. They're not going to just take my gun and not have one for me. They gave me another gun before they take mine. So they give me a new gun and I give them the one that was used in the shooting."

Family Reactions/Interactions. The fifteenth theme focuses on the participants' families and how they interacted with their families after their incidents. For example:

Participant #1 stated how he needed to see his dad and how his wife reacted to people talking about the incident:

"Then I got blindsided by something I didn't see coming, two days after the shooting, and I don't know why I had this crazy drive I had to see my dad, I had to see him. So me and my wife we go, we pick him up and we go and we're having lunch at this fast food restaurant in [name of city]. We're sitting out there eating and the people working there are talking about the shooting, obviously they didn't have facts straight, but they were

talking about like 'we shot him twenty or thirty times and he had put his hands up,' like off the wall ridiculous stuff. Well it really, really, really bothered me for a second and then I was like 'these people are idiots, they're ignorant, they don't even know what they are talking about,' but my wife, we just about had to restrain her. She was getting ready to go clean house."

He (#1) recalled another interaction he had with his wife:

"My wife said I was super agitated which that is not something I ever notice or noticed but she said I was super agitated for a time after that, slightly withdrawn, and I told her I said 'I don't understand that because I talked to you about this stuff.' And I'm so conscience that I don't want to fall into those traps every three days or so I'd go 'how am I doin [sic]?' And she's like, 'what do you mean?' 'The check list how am I doin [sic]?' And she would rattle off to me, 'well yesterday you just stared at the freakin [sic] wall like you were watching TV.' 'No I was thinking about this and that.' She goes, 'well you didn't tell me so I assumed you were zoning out.' I said 'no I was thinking about this that or the other.' I could detail tell her what I was thinking about but I was aggressive, well not aggressive, I was aggravated a lot easily aggravated especially with the kids."

Also, he (#1) stated:

"My wife is sitting here telling me 'we just talked about that' and 'I don't know what you are talking about you're crazy.' Then I would go sit down and really, really, really, really think and I would go 'she was right.' Short term memory was probably the biggest problem I had right afterwards and like I said it was horrendous, it was really, really bad."

When asked if short term memory loss was a problem, he (#1) stated:

> "Not too much but I had a safety net, my wife didn't leave my wife pretty much, literally for almost the first week and a half to two weeks she just didn't. And I was perfectly, everybody has their own relationships and some people have to have their alone time, we're not like that so I was perfectly fine with that."

Participant #2 could deal with the public making comments to him about the shooting, but the people that were making comments to his family:

> "It doesn't bother me so much, me personally, but pick on me talk crap about me try to fight, leave my family alone they had nothing to do with it."

Participant #3 had some anger that would be directed toward his wife in the form of arguments and he knew he needed to get a handle on his emotions:

> "I got in a fight, an argument was more correct with my spouse and I ended up ripping power strip out of the wall and basically unplugging the TV, the power strip came apart and I ended up walking out to the little garage we had at the time and I sat there and she kept calling, she would call and they'd come, the guys would come and talk to me. Just make sure we weren't going to get out of hand. I did have some emotional rollercoaster ride through there where my emotions got peaked and then would come back down then there would be an argument be something would happen, just part of that wave and eventually that tapered off like I explained the wave thing. That tapered off and I haven't had issue with that in a long time. The needing to deal with it so it didn't leak out in anger and those other aspects of life that it can. For my family's sake I knew I needed to process it out and not let it be something that drives me."

Participant #4 recalled how he had sensitive hearing after his incident and he knew he needed to not lash out at his kids when they were making noise:

> "For me the first thing I have to do if I'm feeling that way is I have to make sure I'm not lashing out, even though the noise is what's bothering me, they're really not causing me the problem, they are but they're not. It's not their fault so I just try to like remove myself and tell my wife 'hey I've having one of those days where noise is killing me,' and then she'll go to the girls and 'okay you guys need to be quiet today' or she'll take them somewhere, or I'll go do something with a friend or something like that."

Participant #6 is not completely sure how his wife processed him getting shot:

> "It's funny though never really, I don't know how she processed it. She's thinking 'leg wound it's gotta [sic] hurt but no problem.' That's her defense mechanism, that's how I think she protected herself against that. She didn't want to think the worst and she didn't assume the worst. That's the way she's kind of wired."

Participant #7 recalls how he found it odd that his department separated him from his wife after the incident:

> "I remember the first thing that I did is they separated us from our wives, I thought that was really stupid because you know they always talk about brotherhood, that might be the case in a big department but when you come from [small town] our number one supporters are our family our wives. The only the person that I discuss work with outside of work is my wife and she listens so I found that kind of odd."

He (#7) also stated how it was his wife he wanted to see after the incident:

> "That's who I wanted there was my wife, if I didn't ask her to come, but she wants to hug me I'm gonna [sic] hug her."

His (#7) oldest daughter was very young at the time of his incident:

"Around that time that's when my daughter, my oldest daughter she started asking questions. That was kind of hard, these pictures were in the paper, 'why are you sad, why is mom sad?' That kind of thing and you'd have to explain to her and I'd never been a parent before so you're trying to explain to her 'there were some bad people and daddy had to do something and mom was scared.'"

He (#7) worries about the legacy it leaves his wife and children:

"The legacy that it leaves is on your kids and your wife, I walk out the door and my wife 'thinks is this going to happen again?' 'Is he not going to be so lucky next time?' My kids were so young they don't understand it and they still don't understand it because they have it in their mind what happened and you try to explain it to them and they just don't get it."

Participant #8 called his wife after his incident, because he knew she would hear about it:

"At the scene before I came up here I called my wife and told her and called my mom because she hears everything and my wife hears everything. I called them and told them, 'hey if you hear something happened at [gas station],' I didn't tell them what, 'I was like I'm okay.' Of course she finds out what it is and she's blowing me up, checking, and we're up here pretty late and they let our family come up here so my wife and child came up here so that helped a lot, letting us have access to our family and not being confined. I think that helped out a lot and I think it probably helped her out more than anything because I think she was more traumatized by the whole situation than I was. I think if affects her a lot more than it affects me."

He (#8) told how his wife reacted after the first shooting:

"Yeah she gets upset, we have a great relationship, but I can tell she gets quiet and like I know in the first shooting she was calling [officer] trying to get advice from [officer]. She took it a lot harder than I took it. She's good for she reaches out to other police wives. It helps her out but it really affects her more than it affects me and I don't know if it's just eventually it's all going to come out or if I'm really just trying to keep it all in or what and just try to stay the manly husband that I am. When I see her upset I can't get upset too. We're no good together."

Participant #9 thought it bothered his wife at the time of his incident:

"When I shot and killed the guy I was married at the time. I think it bothered my wife at the time more than it did me."

He (#9) was asked if he knew how his sons reacted to the incident where he was shot:

"To be honest, I don't know. I have talked about it with my younger son. He said he was just worried or scared. When I talked to my oldest son, you know, the same thing. It's just one of those things we don't talk about much anymore."

Participant #10 knew his children were worried about him:

"So it was stressful for all of us and my kids would really worry. They would before but that really pushed it over the edge."

He (#10) also stated:

"My children were affected probably more so than me because I still have to go to work every day and I saw that worry. Not so much as fear now but I'm still going and doing that job every day and that worried them a lot."

He (#10) was asked if he talked to his wife a lot about his incident:

"Oh her and I talked nightly."

He (#10) thinks it helped her and him to work through it:

> "Yeah I think so it helped her about as much as it did me and that's the other issue. She went through as much as I did but those people are kind of forgotten."

Participant #11 recalled how being with his family helped him:

> "I've got a wife and two boys and that helped out a lot with the decompression. Just being with them and knowing that I came home to them."

He (#11) ended up talking to his father about the incident:

> "It's one of those things that you really don't talk about. I don't bring it up to anybody else. She thinks in her mind if I wanna [sic] talk about I will talk about it. My father, he was a Vietnam vet, growing up through life I never knew what he did in Vietnam. After this incident we had a few heart to hearts and very similar stories that occurred, just never knew. Because that's just how he dealt with it. Worked his life, provided, was a good father but it's just something that we were put into."

Participant #13 ended up asking for another week at the end of his administrative leave for his family:

> "I asked for an additional week, not necessarily for myself but for my family. You gotta [sic] make that phone call twice to your wife and let her know and it gets a little more stressful for her. You know what happens the next time, am I gonna [sic] come home?"

He (#13) has not told his children about either of his shootings:

> "They don't know about either one. Thankfully they haven't figured it out yet. Eventually they will. For me personally I went their schools, talked to their principals, talked to their teachers because it was in the paper. It's a small community where my kids go to school at, a lot of people know that I'm a police officer, and I didn't want one of kids' friends

> coming up and saying something to my kids and them like what are you talking about? And have to explain that to them later on. So I talked to the school and they were on board with trying to keep it from them and they had questions and eventually I'd have to talk to them but they still don't know. I still got all the newspaper clippings, everything for both of them."

He (#13) knows he will have to tell them eventually, but he does not want them to worry about that until they have to:

> "Yeah, I think they were just too young. Eventually, I'll tell them but when they're old enough to understand. I don't want them stressing over every day I go to work. That's not something that kids should have to deal with."

Participant #15 thought his wife was dealing with his incident:

> "My wife was really pretty good with it, with me. She didn't express a whole lot about that and I think that she had been doing some of that for me."

He (#15) talked to his oldest children about it:

> "I ended up telling my older two that I was involved in a shooting just so that when they go back to school there not hearing it from one of the kids in their class. I didn't give them all the details of it. They're too young for that. I just told them 'I was in a shooting and I was okay and all the other police officers were okay.' And I told them that the suspect was going to go to jail. That's all they needed to know."

Worry. The sixteenth theme deals with how the officers were asked questions prompting them to tell how they were affected by their incidents. Some reported feeling guilt, worry, or reactions to the stress in the aftermath of their incidents. There were multiple quotes from many

of the officers, so quotes were picked that best portrayed how their incidents affected each of them. For example:

> Participant #2: "Still get a little emotional talking about it. Not a day goes by that I'm not somehow reminded of it, every time I hear a knife call out. Every time I hear a mentally disturbed woman call come out. I might see someone walking down the street that kind of looks like her or, one of my buddies might give me some of that good natured ribbing about it. That doesn't bother me, but what does bother me is knowing that I had a part in somebody dying."

He (#2) also stated:

> "That was the longest two years I think I ever been through. It hurts, it hurts a lot. Like I said there's not a day goes by that I'm not somehow reminded of it in some way or form."

Participant #3 recalls what happened to during the trial of the subject that shot him:

> "And I remember the first trial, I remember mentally thinking 'the baggage that's going to come with this' and I remember putting it down and walking away and that was after I had just got done testifying, 'okay we're about done' because I think there was only one or two people left when they came out. As soon as they declared a mistrial I remember going right back to that baggage and picking that stuff right back up and I've been carrying it ever since. I have never been able to put it down mentally like I was going to put it down the first time. Did the second trial, there was a different defense attorney and he told me in advance what he was going make me do, I get up and do stupid human tricks, in other words I had to act it out with him, not only was it bad enough I got to sit there and talk about I got to act it out again."

He (#3) elaborated on what he meant by "baggage":

> "The mental. I remember because you got to relive it when you're sitting up there on the stand, I think I spent like two or three hours up there so you're reliving all this all over again and so I remember when I was done talking about it, I thought I was going to be done with it and just that mental picture. I think I just mentally put all the baggage all the emotion all of the stuff I knew I was going to be carrying with this and mentally put them in some little suit cases and when I was done, this was the first trial, I remember sitting in one of the offices off to the side and mentally taking my hands and putting those two suit cases on the floor and letting them go. And I felt a relief, I felt lighter. I could start truly healing and getting past all of this stuff, until they told me it was a mistrial and they told me I was going to have to relive it all over again. I went right back to those suit cases, I mentally picked them right back up and I've been carrying them ever since."

He (#3) felt he had to wait until the trail to really process his emotions:

> "Everything as a whole, I think a lot of it was just letting go of the initial stuff so I could really begin to heal. Begin to start just start processing those emotions because I could talk about it to my counselor but I couldn't really talk about it with any other people that were there for the trial because you don't want the defense attorney going 'hey you made up stories or go together and you all made up your story.' So if he ever asked me, that I could say 'I never talked to anybody about this.' I intentionally waited until after the trial to talk about it, to do those things so I didn't want to give the defense any opportunity to make any of those arguments. There was a lot of anxiety. I remember hearing the radio traffic when I was sitting up on the stand, just like I'm doing now was mentally going through the whole thing. It was like a movie at that point, in your mind's eye and I'm just

playing the whole scene, the whole event, the whole things but back then when it was that close to the event and I hadn't really dealt with it much that it was still pretty raw."

He (#3) did not feel he could release his emotions until after the trail:

"Yeah because I held onto everything because I wanted to be able to present everything to the jury and I didn't wanna [sic] really release any of it, but mentally too, I didn't think I really could release it until after the trial because that was part of it. You have the event then you have a little bit of healing then the trial. You can't really, at least for me, I couldn't really put it away until the trial was done."

He (#3) is still carrying that baggage today:

"I don't know maybe I was afraid that something else was going happen, who knows. There is a whole process and maybe some judge out there is going to agree that something got jacked up with the trial and I was going to have to do this a third time. Then it's kind of defense because it was so shocking and kind of painful to have to pick that back up again and what I thought I was getting rid of. I think that was almost as traumatic as, I don't want to say as the event itself, but next to the even that was probably the most traumatic to just have to pick all that crap up and then there it is."

Participant #4 felt bad that he did not feel bad:

"I really didn't have a lot to be honest with you. I think for me I felt a little bit of emotion but I didn't feel bad and I felt bad about that."

He (#4) wondered if there was something wrong with him:

"In a way I felt like is there something wrong with me? Am I such a cold hearted person that I don't feel remorseful or bad?"

He (#4) also knew this affected a lot of people:

> "I know he didn't have a lot of family but that part of it makes me feel bad because it does affect so many people. And even though he left us no choice people are still affected by that for the rest of their lives. That's something, I wouldn't say it's hard to deal with but it's something you do have to kind of come to terms with."

Right after the incident he (#4) thought about it a lot but now he can go longer without thinking about it:

> "I've noticed over time those days are become less and less all the time but really that's the only thing, from time to time I'll think about the shooting but it's something that brings it up and probably the two or three months afterwards I couldn't get it out of my head, it's like 'please stop thinking about this.' 'When am I gonna [sic] stop, is it always gonna [sic] be like this?' 'Am I always going to think about these events?' Now I can go days or weeks without even really thinking about it. You know time heals. It just takes time."

Participant #5 relives it each day on some level:

> "I mean you relive it every day anyway to some level. It kind of was because I did my job but then you got people that, there were people just putting stupid stuff, assault my character and different things, trying to start rumors."

He (#5) recalls how it does not leave his mind:

> "Flashbacks, triggers. It's hard, it doesn't leave your mind. You think about it every day, at least once. It used to I guess consume more. Now, as soon as I stepped away from police work, it's still there, you'll never get rid of it."

He (#5) would seclude himself:

"I became real secluded, I just went back to my bedroom by myself for hours, I might be reading just not wanting to be around, just, just not me. I guess things just started adding up. I went to see somebody then it got to the point that you start getting suicidal thoughts, especially drinking, things weren't well."

Participant #7 remarked on his hypervigilance:

"After you sleep that first time that's when the hypervigilance, I would sometimes sit up here and think that guy might have escaped from the hospital or jail and come out here."

Also:

"The debriefing that was the biggest emotional part was the hypervigilance the fear that somebody was going to come after you or your family because of what you did." (Participant #7)

Hypervigilance was the biggest reaction:

"But there is not denying the biggest thing I have is the hypervigilance, I assume you know what that means, it's where you can just be out of nowhere and think that somethings going to happen. Sitting here watching TV and you look outside, 'is he out there?' 'If he's out there where are my guns at?' 'Am I prepared?' 'Do I have the right?' It's weird, it's a very odd thing to do." (Participant #7)

He (#7) recalled other issues:

"There is some depression some self-worth issues that I feel sometimes as far as, those aren't so prevalent today but it was when I was talking about the feeling of 'you did something wrong' because there was no good job or that's what you're supposed to do."

Participant #9 recalled the emotions he felt after having to shoot his subject:

"All of them. You're mad, you're nervous, you can't sleep, I couldn't sleep, lying in bed at night. I'll just ride around just trying to sort things out because it's a human life. That's someone's father, brother, son, it just so happened the person I shot, come to find out the person who I had gone to high school with is their cousin. Just to be in that situation and explain to them 'hey, I, you know I'm sorry that, that had to happen.' 'I didn't have any control over it.' 'I have a family to go home to.'"

He (#9) also stated:

"That's the main thing, or I'd say the thing that, I think back in those situations to where I'll wake up, then there's the nightmares, the bad dreams. You just wake up real quick. That's why I get up and ride around or something, listen to music or something just to try to make myself tired. I know I'll come home then and sleep."

He (#9) recalled a reaction he had after the incident where he was shot:

"I think after though still being involved with all that stuff the last one that really struck me because there'd be times when I'd be watching TV and break down crying. That's when I was going to the counselor and everything and he said 'you have all that stuff that just builds up and then it's like a volcano and just overflows.' I was diagnosed with PTSD. It's just something that you'll always think about, it's always there. It's just how you deal with it. Some people do it by drinking, drugs, and all kinds of stuff. I just keep myself busy, try to work through it."

Participant #1 knew it was a justified shooting but worried it would not be perceived as such:

"The only anxiety that I dealt with was worried about the one round and worrying that it wouldn't be a justified shooting, in my head I knew it was, but it's not up to me to make that determination."

Participant #6 had been in command during incidents and that responsibility weighs on him:

> "I feel responsible for that, I told the officer that was hit I told him 'I feel responsible for that' because it should have been a little bit better planned. It's the only thing at the time that we really had, I'd like to go back and do it again, I don't wanna [sic] say that, I'd to had that opportunity to reassess and rethink that way that out. That weighs on me at times and even from that point on I was still in charge of critical incidents and major operations, taking everything into consideration."

He (#6) makes sure to learn from his mistakes:

> "I think about that a lot. The errors that I've made the mistakes I've made trying to make sure I never made them again and learned from them."

He (#6) feels the responsibilities of commanding officers and this causes more stress than the shooting he was involved in:

> "Normally I can know what I'm going to do and can take care of myself, now I have to be in charge of everybody else making sure they do what they are supposed to do, ultimately that responsibility falls back on me and I know [officer] feels that to a degree. It's a big responsibility and it's a lot of authority and pressure at times. But that side of it is a far bigger stressor then what actually happened to me. There is no doubt about that."

He (#6) also states:

> "I mean the supervisory part of it is a completely different responsibility, it's extremely larger, there is more responsibility. I'm not taking anything away from that patrolman because he's got a job to do, and doesn't do it things go wrong. It's what a part of the responsibility and the stress can be to ensure that each operator does what he is supposed to do so that they whole machine works right and it gets done efficiently as possible. If

there is something wrong with one of those operators and they don't do their job right, it's got a ripple effect that can affect the whole operation ultimately I am responsible for it. That's a stressor. Anxiety to a degree is right, more of an anxiousness more of a let's get it done let's get through it and make sure everyone's okay."

Discussion of Findings

The interview data for this study involved 17 participants representing 20 total hours and 27 minutes of interviews. The average interview lasted 1 hour and 12 minutes. The range of the interviews spanned 18 minutes to 3 hours and 9 minutes. All participants were male. All were current or former municipal or county law enforcement officers. None of the participants were indicted for their actions. In other words, each of the incidents reported by the officers for this study were determined by internal investigation and prosecutor review and/or grand jury examination as "clean shoots." The original data coding for this study resulted in a total of 55 themes from the qualitative interviews. These were collapsed or reduced to 16 of themes for purposes of the present analysis. As a result, sixteen themes were used in the above presentation of data.

The first theme, "Memories of the Shooting, Shots, and Guns," is aimed at explaining what the officers experienced, as they could recollect, from the shooting incident, the number of shots fired, and what types of guns they were up against. There were a mix of responses with some participants having quite "fuzzy" memories these experiences while others had very vivid recollections. Some remembered exactly what the subject did to escalate the encounter and this was perhaps the most vivid for most participants. Also reasonably vivid were memories of the types of weapons presented by the subject within the encounter. Less consistent were memories of how many shots were fired by the participants at the subjects in order to extinguish the threat

to life. Some knew exactly how many shots were fired while others were less sure during the encounter. This makes sense in that the initial threat – the subject's actions and weapons – were at the beginning of the fatal encounter. However, and after this, the officers were in highly intense and stressful situations. Some reported how their "training" came to the surface, which is normal. One will often hear officers talk about the importance of training and how it "takes over" in crisis situations. It should not be surprising that some officers could not remember how many shots they fired – and some as we will see didn't remember even hearing their gun – given the high stress of a life and death encounter. The stress experienced impacted some officers' perceptions and memories. What of those who had vivid memories of the shooting? This could be reduced to individual differences in officers and their cognitive abilities to process encounters given the uniqueness of personal arousal in stressful circumstances. As a sign of this, some participants were very "cool" and "controlled" when explaining their experiences while a few became very emotional as they relived the events which changed their lives.

The second theme, "Shot on Instinct," is focused on what the officers' were thinking when they decided to shoot the person who was threatening their life. What their thought process was, if they consciously remember making the decision to shoot, or if it was a reaction to a stressful life threatening situation. Many participants felt it was instinctual but each had some sort of cognitive process from recollections. They saw that the subject had a gun or another type of weapon. Many recalled the threat happening fast and they did not have time to tell the subject to put the gun down. A few participants did have time to say this but the subject did not listen to commands. They had to respond to the threat to their lives; they had to stop the threat. Officers are trained to stop the threat that is in front of them; the subject may or may not die as a result. Officers do not chose to pull the trigger lightly. They sense or see a threat to their lives, or to the

lives of the people around them, and they act against that threat. They were in high stress situations and they recognized these situations by the experiences they have attained during their law enforcement career. They can recognize what type of gun the subject had or read the body language of the subject. Officers interact with people on a daily basis and they learn to read body language and can tell when that body language is likely hostile. Some officers said they reverted to their "training" and some felt it was "instinctive" when they shot their subject. Their training and experiences mold their instincts and lead them to the decisions they make. They train in firearms and train in different scenarios in order to recognize and neutralize the threat in front of them. Officers have a thought process of recognizing the threat then figuring out the best way to neutralize the threat. They do not think "I have to kill this person"; they think I need to stop this threat. They are involved in a high stress situation and must make "split-second" decisions. Many of the participants said they did what they had to do to stop the threat, they did not want to shoot the subject, but they had to neutralize the threat.

The third theme, "Auditory Exclusion," is concerned about the physical responses some participants reported of loss of hearing, only hearing certain shots, and not hearing anything at all during the incident. Some participants reported not hearing any shots at all, only hearing the first shot, the shell casings hitting the ground, or the sound of the shot was reduced. In high stress situations officers' bodies can react in ways that are unexplainable but it is their body's way of protecting itself from harm. If an officer went to the shooting range without hear protection their ears would "ring for days" but in a high stress situation such as a police action shooting where the officer is reacting to a threat the body takes measures to protect itself. Officers also reported remembering other sensations that they have never noticed before, such as, feeling the metal of the trigger or hearing the shell casings hit the ground but not hearing the shots. It is unclear why

they focused on these specifics but in that type of situation officers' bodies are in a heightened state of awareness so it would be easier to notice those sort of sensations.

The fourth theme, "Perception of Time," is aimed at explaining what officers experienced in terms of an altered perception of time. Some officers recalled how time seemed to slow down for them and how they remembered small details such as what the subject was wearing or seeing the slide action of their gun. They recalled feeling like the incident lasted "forever" when in reality it was mere seconds - then right after the shots were fired their perception of time returned to normal. It makes sense that time would "slow down" for the officers during their encounter with a subject who is threatening their lives. Their bodies react to give them the best advantage in a life or death scenario. Officers are under extreme stress in a life-threatening situation and the body heightens their senses and gives the perception of time slowing down. It is not surprising that some officers remember specific aspects of the situation because of this heightened state of awareness. These individual officers could already by more inclined to notice details and their heightened senses amplified that inclination.

The fifth theme, "Shock," is focused on the officers' reactions of shock directly out of the incident and explaining the differences in reactions between officers. Some officers recalled having an "oh shit" moment when they realized they had just shot somebody and others thought it was "crazy" that somebody was pointing a gun at them. It is understandable that an officer would feel shock after having to shoot a subject, because they do not go to calls thinking they are going to shoot someone. They understand that in their line of work a scenario may come up that requires them to make that decision in order to protect themselves and the people around them. They may prepare themselves for this possibility but it is still a shock that they had to do it. Also, officers know that in their line of work the possibility of having to shoot someone is a reality but

they do not expect it to happen. Especially, when they have been to hundreds of calls and nothing happened. Officers are trained to handle these types of situations, but it does not mean they expect them to happen.

The sixth theme, "Premonition," is meant to explain why officers believed they took certain actions before their incident or performed a certain action during the incident. Some officers reported having a "bad feeling" before their incident. They felt that the situation was "going to go south" very quickly. Others reported putting their bullet proof vest on or wearing a different type of vest before the incident happened. These officers feel there was some sort of "sixth sense" that lead them to these decisions. Officer experiences could lead to a "sixth sense" developed and their psyche are telling them that an encounter scenario will not turn out well. A few participants reported thinking that the subject would do something different than what actually happened or the officer moved in a certain way. Officers go to hundreds of calls throughout their careers so they expect a subject to act a certain way, or a scenario to play out in a certain way, because that is what happened in the past. It is not surprising that officers expect a scenario to go the same way as scenarios in the past. Officers may expect the situation to go one way but they adapt to the situation and follow their instincts.

The seventh theme, "Clarity of Memories," was focused on explaining what some officers remembered about their incident with clarity. What they remembered that is still fresh in their minds even if years passed after their incident. What is the first recollection they have about the incident? Some officers focused on how they had to make sure their buddies were okay and focused more on the officers around them. Others focused on specific aspects or sensations of the incident itself. Some responded with thoughts they had before the incident or who they interacted with after the incident. The participants focused on memories that resonated in their minds after

the incident occurred. There were not any similar responses for this theme but these specific memories are what the participants remembered with clarity. The responses were what the officers thought about when asked this question so they had some sort of significance to the officer.

The eighth theme, "Time to Process the Incident," is aimed at explaining why it took a long time for the realization of what happened to affect officers, what the officers experienced when they realized what just happened to them, and the reaction they had. Multiple participants reported it took a couple days or even up to a couple weeks before the realization of what happened during the incident was fully internalized. Some reported they were in a "fog" after the incident. These responses are understandable, because it takes the mind and body time to process a potentially traumatic incident. It may not be "traumatic" to the officer, but it is a stressful situation and the mind and body needs time to heal.

The ninth theme, "Heightened Awareness," is focused on what officers' experienced in their heightened state of awareness during the incident and how the incident made them more observant in their lives. There were responses of being more observant of surroundings and interactions with other people. Officers reported being more "on edge" given that an incident like theirs could happen again. However, it also slowed them down and made them think through a situation more. It is not surprising that officers are warier of interacting with people and are more observant of what is going on around them. They experienced a threat to their lives and they do not want to repeat that scenario. Officers do not want to get attacked and want to take all steps necessary to prevent another police action shooting. Some officers changed how they viewed certain calls and would give more people breaks. This can be explained as the officers' reframe what constitutes a "serious" call. A call that is not life-threatening or a serious offense may not

rank high on the officers' scale anymore. Officers' perspectives change throughout their career and they decide what calls are "truly" serious.

The tenth theme, "Anger," relates to participants' feelings of frustration, annoyance, or anger about themselves or other people. There was a mixture of responses with some participants' frustrations directed at the public, coworkers, and the subject. The public second guessing an officer's decision to shoot a subject or critiquing what an officer did was especially troublesome for some officers. The officer's frustrations are justified, because the public does not know what the officer is thinking during a life-threatening situation. The majority of the public has never been in a life-threatening situation so they do not know the amount of stress the officer is under and the split second decisions that must be made. Only a person who has been in a situation where their life is in danger can understand. Anger at the subject is justified, because the subject's actions have led to this confrontation. The subject is responsible for their actions of attacking an officer. The officer did not go looking for this situation. They are only doing what they have been trained to do and that is to serve and protect. Having to shoot the subject will affect these officers for the rest of their lives. Some officers reported anger towards their coworkers, because they felt they did not get the support they needed. A majority of an officer's support after an incident like this is their fellow police officers and their family. If they do not have enough support from their fellow officers, this can lead to a longer road to recovery. No support or lack of constant support can lead officers to feel resentment towards their coworkers, and it takes them more time to heal or it can be detrimental to the healing process.

The eleventh theme, "Social Support," focuses on how social support from friends, family, and coworkers affects officers in the aftermath of a police-involved shooting. There were participants who had emotional issues after their incident and their fellow officers confronted

them. These officers did not even know how they were acting until they were told. Officers need people to keep them in line and on the right path to healing. Many of the participants reported that they had a lot of people checking up on them and asking if they needed anything. For these officers, just knowing that there were people looking out for them gave them the support they needed. Officers found that their closest friends, or the people they were involved in the incident with, were the people they could talk to about the incident. This is understandable, because the officer's closest friends understand them better than a stranger could. Their fellow officers who were involved in the incident know how they are feeling, because they went through the same situation and are dealing with the same emotions. A few participants reported that they did not start to heal until they were put in contact with someone who had been through a similar situation. They needed someone who knew what they were thinking and feeling. Someone who could relate to them because unless a person has been in that situation they cannot understand. They can sympathize but they cannot understand. Such emotional support needs to be consistent. Some participants' reported that their support ended too quickly or they had no support at all. This led them to feel abandoned and forgotten. They were not taken care of by the people they thought were their closest friends. The support needs to be constant and continuous in order for the officer to know they did what was right and just.

The twelfth theme, "Resolve/Conviction," focuses on how some participants found that they had a new conviction or resolve about how or why they are in law enforcement. A majority of the responses consisted of officers saying that they did what they had to do in order to 'go home' to their families at the end of the day. They know what they did was right because they stopped the threat that was made to them and the people around them. They did what they had to do to stop the threat to their lives. Participants reported feeling resolute that the other officers

"had their back." This kind of trust is important to safely executing a plan of action during a critical incident. Trust is important in law enforcement, because officers need to know that they can rely on each other during a crisis. If they can trust their fellow officers and know what they did was right, then it solidifies their conviction for their career and related commitment to the profession.

The thirteenth theme, "Ready to Return to Work," is meant to explain why the officers felt they were ready to go back to work or not at the end of their administrative leave. Many of the participants were ready to get back to work and were pushing to go back to work as soon as possible. The did not want to sit idle, that was boring to them. This makes sense because officers work in a fast paced environment where an incident can escalate at any time, and they are going from call to call. Having to sit at home and be idle is the exact opposite of what they are used too. They may enjoy it for a few days but after a prolonged amount of time they will start to get bored. They want to get back to work and get back into a normal routine. They just went through a critical incident that has changed them and now their daily life has been altered. However, some officers felt they went back to work too early. They were able to function well and do their job but it slowed down their healing process. Officers need time to heal before they go back into the environment that has a possibility of them being in another shooting. Officers recover and heal at different paces. Officers need to recognize when they need more time to heal and what they need in order to heal. If they need to go talk to a psychologist, then go do that. If they need to talk to their best friend, they should. Officers need to give themselves the time they need to heal.

The fourteenth theme, "Gun as an Identity," focuses on explaining how an officer's gun is a part of their identity and holds sentimental value for them. All of the officers interviewed had

departments that had protocols in place that gave them a replacement gun because officers have to turn in any weapons that were discharged during the incident as part of the homicide investigation. The gun is a symbol of an officer's authority and a symbol of the officer himself. If that gun were to be taken away in public right after it was used to shoot someone and a replacement was not given, that would be detrimental to the officer. They would start to feel like they did something wrong and after a highly stressful situation where they had to shoot someone, and for some kill the person, it could affect their mental health. For a few participants the gun had sentimental value. Although perceivable as macabre, this is understandable because it was used in a significant incident in their life. It is a keepsake if nothing else. This is not to mean that the gun is a tool for obtaining a "trophy" (the subject). Rather, it is important to them as *their* duty weapon and there is no reason for anyone else to possess it given its taint.

The fifteenth theme, "Family Reactions/Interactions, focuses on how the participants' family was affected and how the participants interacted with their families after the incident. Many participants stated how their families were a big part of their support system, specifically their wives. They relied on their wives to confront them about their abnormal behavior and "set them straight." An officer's wife is the closest person to him and this means he trusts his wife wholeheartedly. People guard their true emotions from people they do not know but trust people closest to them. Some participants stated how they got into arguments with their wives over stupid reasons, and this is a part of being close to someone. That person has to deal with the good and the bad. This also works in reverse that the officer has to help his wife heal. The incident affects her too, not in the same way as the officer but it still affected her. It also affects their children if they have children. This is a traumatic event for the whole family because their husband or their dad was in a situation where he could have been shot. If he was shot, then they

have to worry about if it was fatal or not. This puts a lot of stress on the entire family and they need to support each other in order to heal.

The sixteenth, and last, theme, "Worry," is aimed at explaining the participants' feelings of guilt about the incident, what feelings or memories haunt them, or any emotional "baggage" them have from the incident. Some officers are haunted by the fact that they had to shoot the subject. The fact that they had to take a human life still weighs on their mind and if a call comes out that is similar to the scenario they were in, it brings it all back to the surface. They have to relive it over again. Subjects that did not end up dying had trials requiring officer testimony. This is another way they have to relive the incident, because they have to tell the story over and over again. Depending on how much time has passed between the incident and the trial, the officer may not have had time to heal and then they have to reopen those wounds at the trial. This is mentally difficult for the officer. There were some participants who felt they did what was "right" but felt guilty because they did not feel guilty. Officers also felt bad for the families of the subject because the shooting affected them too. Some of the participants had be the commanding officer during an incident that resulted in an officer getting hurt. They feel guilty because they did not anticipate what would happen even though they had limited information at the time. They feel responsible because in the case of a SWAT raid they are the ones that come up with the plan and they feel responsible for every officer under their command. This is understandable since they cannot predict every small action but they still feel guilty if an officer gets hurt. Their mistakes eat away at them. Critical incidents affect every person involved in some shape and form.

Conclusion

Police officers protect and serve the community at any cost. The cost can include their physical and mental health. A study conducted in New Zealand in the 1970s found that over 85 percent of emergency personal have some sort of traumatic reaction when involved in a traumatic event (Stephens, 2008). Traumatic incidents have effects on emergency personal, but police officers walk a fine line when it comes to shooting and not shooting a suspect. If an officer shoots a suspect, then the officer has ended a life and this can have adverse effects. Police officers perceive their job as important for the well-being of the citizens they protect. Officers perceive their job as important for the wellbeing of the citizens they protect and if police officers do not feel important then they lose their drive and commitment to their job (Fyfe, 1985). Lack of recognition for their sacrifices can lead law enforcement officers to feel their job is not important.

The experience officers gain throughout their career help them to mentally prepare themselves for critical incidents. The street experience consists of the officer's degree of exposure in the field, range of encounters, and degree of competence when dealing with different situations including the exposure to death (Henry, 1995). Officers have to be able to trust each other during high stress situations so they will test rookie officers to make sure they are on par with the standards of the department. They also make sure the rookie officers understand that "ordinary citizens can be both deceitful and manipulative, often for no clearly discernable reason other than that they are suspicious and distrustful of the police" (Henry, 1995, p. 96). Officers need to be wary when they interact with people so that they are not caught off guard. An officer must be aware of potential risk and be ready to react in any situation, but they must also distance themselves from the effects of these dangerous situations for their own mental and physical

health. Police officers have the potential to come into contact with dangerous situations on a day to day basis. Cadets go through training that is supposed to equip them with the knowledge and mentality to make quick, decisive decisions in high risk situations. Broome completed a qualitative study on how cadets would react to these mock situations (Broome, 2011). This study was meant to test the psychological and emotional pressures cadets go through in these mock situations. The study concluded that the cadets were more anxious about impressing their superiors than that they were in a high risk scenario (Broome, 2011). This speaks to the strength of the police subculture.

Police officers are also given ethics training that is meant to give them the tools needed to appropriately handle situations in order to make decisive decisions when it comes to using lethal force in high risk situations (Bardeen, 2013). Gun assaults against officers, officers called for back-up, high risk calls (robbery, gunmen, etc.), the suspect points a weapon or fires at officers first, and at least one officer is injured during gun fight are situations that police officers may face that increase the chance of deadly force being used (White, 2012). During these types of situations officers must make split second decisions in order to protect themselves and the people around them.

The study consisted of interviewing seventeen current or former police officers and asking them a serious of questions meant to reveal their emotional and psychological state during and after their incident. The interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed. The data was coded which when reduced resulted in sixteen themes. "Memories of the Shooting, Shots, and Guns" which involves if the participants remember or do not remember the number of shots that they fired, if they remember looking down the sights of their gun, and what they remembered about the subject's weapon which could have been used against them. "Shot on Instinct" which

focuses on whether the officers relied on their instincts when they made the decision to shoot the subject that was attacking them. What there thought process was, if their training throughout their law enforcement career impacted them, and what they were thinking as they made this decision. "Auditory Exclusion" is aimed at the participants that reported loss of hearing, only hearing certain shots, or not hearing at all. "Perception of Time" addressed officer definitions of time during the incident. They recalled time slowing down, speeding up, or even just the realization that their incident happened in such a short amount of time. "Shock" is about the participants' feelings of shock of shooting someone, the shock that someone is actually pointing a gun at them, and the shock that the incident actually happening to them. "Premonition" focuses on how some participants seemed to have a premonition about their incidents such as, having a "bad feeling" before their incidents, the participant performed an action without realizing why, or predicted a subject would engage in a certain action. "Clarity of Memories" focuses on how the participants were asked if they remembered anything about their incident with "clarity." "Time to Process the Incident" involves the amount of time it took officers to process what happened, realize what happened to them, and their reactions after the fact. "Heightened Awareness" focuses on how officers remembered heightened states of awareness after the incident. They were more aware of their surroundings, were more observant, and how they reacted with people's situations. "Anger" focuses on participants' anger, frustrations, and annoyances about themselves or other people. The "Social Support" theme deals with what kind of support officers were given by friends, family, and coworkers after their incident. "Resolve/Conviction" focuses on how some participants found that they had a new conviction or resolve about how or why they are in law enforcement. "Ready to Return to Work" whether the participants felt they were ready to return to work or not after their administrative leave. "Gun as

an Identity" reports how an officer's gun is a part of their identity. Many of the participants noted how attached they were to their gun. It was a symbol of their authority, was a part of their identity, or had sentimental value because it was the gun they used during their shootings. "Family Reactions/Interactions" focuses on the participants' families and how they interacted with their families after their incidents. "Worry," the final theme, theme focuses on how the officers were asked questions prompting them to tell how they were affected by their incidents. Some reported feeling guilt, worry, or reactions to the stress in the aftermath of their incidents. These themes emerged as similar experiences as reported by the officers who were interviewed While they were similar in many ways, the participants had their own unique take on each theme.

This study will allow for a better understanding of psychological, emotional, and mental effects on police officers after a police-involved shooting. A better understanding will allow for better programs to be created in order to help police officers cope with these after effects. This study is only able to reach a small part of the law enforcement community so it may not be applicable to all police officers. Only seventeen officers were interviewed during this study so it cannot be applied to the entirety of the law enforcement community. Also, this study is only a snapshot of these officers lives. A longitudinal study should be considered by future researchers in order to map out effects of law enforcement officers throughout their entire lives. This will allow for the measure of long term affects critical incidents (psychologically, physically, and socially) have on law enforcement officers and better measures can be presented to counteract long term deleterious effects on police officers involved in shootings.

Postscript

A postscript to this research is appropriate. This study began in 2013, which was long before the current public and media attention that has been given to police-involved shootings of citizens.

These findings are even more important now. It is my hope that others, researchers and practitioners alike, find this data and findings useful as steps are taken to mend victims and survivors' lives, officer lives, and build stronger relationships between the police and the community.

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